DON'T MISS THE STORY ON PAGE 59.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 393. FOR WEEK ENDING JULY 11TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

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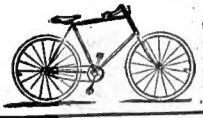

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 393.] For the Week ending July 11th, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

BY MISS WINIFRED GRAHAM.

Author of "When the Birds Begin to Sing," "Through the Valley," "Six First-class Passengers," etc., etc.

PAUPER BLUE BLOOD.

CHAPTER I.

THE NICHE GEORGINA FILLED.

Two figures side by side watched a sunset.

"Glorious!" whispered the woman, shading her eyes with her hand, as if the crimson glow, the sea of gold with opal shores, dazzled her.

The man—tall, elderly, pale, with grey hair, and deep lines about his mouth—stared into space, the corners of his lips drawn down, his hands thrust in his pockets.

"It will soon pass," he answered, "and then darkness. You have read, Georgina, that the wicked 'love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.' I look out of these God-made eyes, and loathe those God-made splendours. They rake up in my heart the embers of remorse—a long, long bitterness. One evil deed leading to another, till a chain is formed, twined round the soul—strangling—suffocating!"

He pointed with his thin fingers at the fading radiance of the sky. Beneath the amber haze a black cloud rose like a mountain out of a blue lake. He spoke again, while the woman watched his ever-changing expression with keen, wakeful eyes. His were dreamy and dim.

"You cannot always be in darkness, Georgina," shaking his head and contracting his brows; "the time comes when you can no longer hide the truth from yourself. You see your life about to be crowned with *failure*" (he shivered, as if the word cut him); "your pride, your honour, lowered to the dust; your name—that has been great for centuries—suddenly despised, branded by fraud!"

An ashen hue stole to his lips.

"Then," he continued, "you wake to the fearful discovery that you are your own destroyer; death alone can release you from the condemnation of the world, yet by your own works the terrors of death are increased tenfold."

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"Why?" asked the woman hoarsely.

"Because you have bartered immortality for a bauble, closed your eyes against the light gleaming from the great white throne. You have laughed and mocked at the *real*, and made obeisance to the *unreal!* Your feet have stumbled on dark mountains. In Hell there is outer darkness, and yet inextinguishable flame."

He clutched the woman's arm, and gazed straight into her eyes; his voice rose like a wail in the gathering gloom.

"There is light—the light of fire in the endless night of torment—that man may be able to see his folly, his ruin, his madness. But not light enough for him to read any record of deliverance, and possibility of pardon. How can a man face death with this in view?"

Two figures side by side.

The woman tried to speak, her lips moved, but failed to utter a sound. His hand was still upon her arm, holding it in a deadly clasp.

"Better unmitigated blackness," he whispered, as the after-glow of sunset spread its blood-hued fingers on the fair summer earth. "Better night without a solitary candle—a veil of Egyptian darkness—of solemn and palpable gloom!"

He felt a tremor of dread shake his listener's arm. The tightened fingers relaxed upon her sleeve, while a hand stroked her long white fingers.

"I won't scare you with terrors," he said softly.

She glanced up with a queer, incomprehensible smile. Its power and fascination seemed to lull the storm of misery

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in the man's soul. Yet the woman was not beautiful. Her eyes were bright and penetrating, her hair raven, her mouth wide. She had expression. Oh! yes, plenty of it! But the light that gleamed through the black lashes might have been borrowed from the eternal fires. A half sigh broke from her lips as she drew the man's hand against her heart.

"Speak to me as you will," she murmured. "I fear nothing for you—so strong, so powerful—and Ravenscroft is not easily beaten, even when misfortune meets him face to face on the field. Take courage, and this depression will pass."

She spoke with prophetic power, but he bent his head to hide the thought now uppermost in his mind. Georgina was quick at reading thoughts when she looked into Sir Reginald's eyes. "Your wife knows nothing of this impending trouble—you have not prepared her for the blow?"

"No, Georgina; I am too great a coward. You, with your gentle tact and quick sympathy have drawn forth every secret of my heart, as you inspired the love which is yours to-day and for ever. I can speak to you as a kindred soul—a deeply thoughtful, clever woman—one that understands, counsels, sympathises, but does not betray."

"Strange," she replied, "that fate has placed me under your roof just when you needed me most. I used to think the world was empty — a great, blank wilderness through which I was destined to wander alone. I would ask myself the question a hundred times a day—*why, why* am I here? What can I do? It's so solitary walking through life all by myself. Perhaps, I argued, I am different to other people, repellent in my manner, shrinking too readily into my shell, fearing men and women alike, mistrusting humanity at large. I tried to find out where lay the cankerworm. I did not hesitate to acknowledge myself diseased, from a social standpoint, but went down into my heart—my innermost feelings—to try the pulses there. On the surface a thousand things may preserve the appearance of animation and pass for the glow of life and health; but, in reality, the power of loving is dead—cold as lifeless stone!

Sitting on the table swinging her legs.

"So I descended into myself; I searched well, and detected degeneracy. I was unsound in my lonely career. A worm had been eating out the core of my loveless heart. Then at the very height—or shall I say depth?—of my despair I found a niche to fill. I crept into it with freshly-beating pulses, like a hunted animal who suddenly sees the refuge he is seeking open before his bloodshot eyes. The niche was my corner in Ravenscroft Park, the refuge your heart. Then for the first time I realised the expulsive power of a new affection. It cast out fear, it killed honour, it made all men as shadows across my path. I thought of nothing, I yearned for nothing, but *you—you*—in the early morn to the sunset eve. Now, when I sit in my prim position of instructress over your child, I look only for some glimmer of likeness to you in my pupil's eye, some sound in her voice that reminds me I am teaching Reginald's child. It is a work of love—for *you*."

The woman spoke wildly; her passionate face seemed to kindle the last ray of dying sunset, till it flickered like an unholy flame between the two dark figures.

The surroundings appealed to her in their weird beauty, she stretched out her hands to the sky.

"What a lovely, yet what a deadly world!" she half moaned, pleasure and anguish battling in her soul. "The everlasting toll of the funeral bell, the ceaseless tears, the laughter, the joy, the pain. Love in itself is not sinful; how can it be when all things love? But to love in excess, that is crime, and its poison is upon me now, sapping my very life's blood."

"Hush," he said; "crime and love go ill together. Do not couple the two words."

"Then what would you call it? Madness? Infatuation?"

"Neither! Though the taunts of the world would be hurled at a union of hearts such as yours and mine, we can hide the secret away in the store-room of conscience, treasure it as the very essence of life, the wine of mortality. Do not stand up for the ignorant multitude to cast stones at you, but seek the safe and covered paths which are soft to the feet, and refreshingly beautiful!"

"Yes," she replied; "I have a right to choose my own way, for I have no one but myself to consider—and *you*. My life has been stormy, a struggle from birth, bereft of good influence, devoid of love. I have taken the kicks of the world patiently. Heaven forgive me if I linger over the sweets."

The darkness descended, and shadows of tall, imposing trees lay across wide gravel walks, casting an air of gloom and grandeur from their dizzy heights.

The figures turned to walk towards the house. Through the wide shrubbery and past the lake, till Ravenscroft Park, the splendid old family mansion, stood before them. Within and without the presence of wealth asserted itself.

"Ah!" thought Georgina Pluff, as she surveyed the land stretching away for miles, "how rich the verdure! What a splendid estate, and yet in the face of luxury and ease, ruin has dared to step forward, and is lurking within reach of these lordly portals. When the moment comes he will advance, knock boldly at the door, crying 'Admit, admit.' Even the stately Lady Ravenscroft, with her calm, pale, impassive face, cannot bid him nay. All the servants may not shut him out. He besieges the great hall, he fills the house to its very attics with his decayed and loathsome presence."

Georgina drew a deep breath. Yes, the proud Ravenscrofts must suffer poverty as she had known it.

Truly the awful and desperate time had arrived to justify the declaration: "Ye have set at nought all My counsel, and would none of My reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh."

Miss Georgina Pluff went to the schoolroom with lowered eyes. She found her pupil—a pretty girl of fourteen, with rosy cheeks and auburn curls—sitting on the table swinging her legs. Miss Pluff wondered if she ought to tell her it was "unladylike." But she looked at the unmistakable signs of breeding in the child's refined face, and felt that the term would be incongruous. Even the leg swinging was graceful, though careless.

"Where have you been, Miss Pluff?" asked Eva, in rather an aggrieved voice; "I've hunted for you everywhere."

"I was in the garden looking at the sunset."

"Oh! why *didn't* you call me? We might have tried to sketch it together."

"This is your hour for preparation. Why are you not working?"

Eva turned and regarded the open books on the table.

"Simply because I've done it all."

Miss Pluff involuntarily raised her eyebrows. The girl astonished her—she appeared to learn by magic, it was almost uncanny.

"Look," she said, drawing her governess to the window, and pointing to a figure on horseback riding up the drive, "do you know why Sefton is so late?"

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Sir Reginald's son dismounted as Eva spoke, and the girl leant out of the window to wave to her brother.

"No," said Miss Pluff.

"He has been to Rosemont to see Lady Norah. She is very young, and very beautiful. Mother tells me they have an 'understanding.'"

"Then why are they not engaged?"

"Because Lady Norah is a shocking flirt. I heard the FitzJames's say so—she has broken ever so many hearts. Well, you see, her people do not want it made public till they are sure she is not going to change her mind. Of course, Sefton is *quite* certain she won't, and so am I, for who could help loving him? He is so handsome, and so delightfully passionate when fairly roused. I do *love* to see a man in a passion. Don't you?"

"I hardly know. It's such an odd idea, and certainly would not be pleasant if you were the object of the violent wrath!"

"No. But of course a man would never get really angry with a girl. Do you think Lady Norah will marry Sefton?"

"It seems a very suitable match; your brother is the only son of a baronet with untold wealth!"

There was a touch of satire in her tone that yet could not force back the angry tears from her eyes. She resented the sorrows hanging over Sir Reginald, and accepted them as her own.

"Could *you* marry Sefton, Miss Pluff?" continued Eva, engrossed with the subject. "I mean, of course, if you were Lady Norah."

Miss Pluff shrugged her shoulders. "My dear child, what nonsense you talk!"

"She has such green eyes, and they are always laughing at you, even when her lips do not smile. Their lashes are longer than yours, Miss Pluff, though I know you have good ones, and I dare say they are often admired. And then she dresses!"

The girl broke off with an expressive gesture, unable to describe the bewildering toilettes of the flighty and flirtatious Lady Norah.

"Oh! I forgot to tell you, Sefton brought me a lovely stamp album from London yesterday, and I want to show it to father. Look!" holding out her treasure, "isn't it a beauty? May I go and fetch him? He promised to give me the Bulawayo envelope that came this morning. He is always *so* interested in my stamps."

"What is the matter with father?"

The child spoke with undisguised pride and pleasure. Miss Pluff smiled.

"Yes, you may fetch your father, only be quick about it, for I must dress for dinner."

"You need not wait," replied Eva as she rushed away.

Sir Reginald Ravenscroft had insisted on Miss Pluff dining downstairs.

"You *can't* shut a girl like that up in a schoolroom alone all the evening," he had said reproachfully when Miss Pluff was first engaged.

Lady Ravenscroft had demurred, but had finally surrendered to her husband's wishes, saying:

"You know, Reggie, she's rather good-looking for a governess, but really, Sefton is so sensible, and quite wrapped up in Lady Norah, that perhaps it would not matter."

Eva returned with her father and the Bulawayo stamps.

Miss Georgina Pluff was still in the schoolroom.

CHAPTER II.

PREACHING DOWN A DAUGHTER'S HEART.

"WHAT is the matter with father?" asked Eva.

Lady Ravenscroft looked up from the book she was reading under the trees.

"He has a bad headache, and is lying down, so don't make a noise if you pass his room."

The girl watched her mother with rather a puzzled expression.

Lady Ravenscroft was one of those rare characters that think no evil. Her sweet calm face bore testimony to the placid lovable nature beneath. Always pale, but not with the pallor of ill-health, she had once been a very beautiful woman. Her smooth fair hair was parted off her forehead. She was simple yet stately, graceful in every movement, an adoring mother, a devoted wife.

"Do you think father is worried about anything?" said Eva after a pause.

"No, dear. Why do you ask?"

"Only I fancied he seemed different. He looks so dreadfully *old!*"

Lady Ravenscroft stirred uneasily.

"I am afraid his health is failing. I have tried to induce him to go to a doctor, but he always puts it off. Last week, when we were in town, I had the carriage waiting at the door to drive us to Harley Street. I put off an engagement purposely to accompany him, when a telegram came—some

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urgent business, he said. The following day he looked better, and pooh-poohed the idea of consulting Dr. Reynolds."

"Miss Pluff says it is his nerves. She noticed the change in him too."

The book slipped from Lady Ravenscroft's hands, and lay unheeded on the grass. A look of deep anxiety stole into her blue eyes. She stroked Eva's hair softly, as the child rested her head against her mother's knees.

The sound of wheels on the carriage drive changed the current of their thoughts, as a dog-cart driven by a girl came in sight.

"Why, it's Lady Norah," cried Eva springing to her feet.

"Yes, she has come to lunch. Sefton asked her yesterday."

The visitor drew up her horse on catching sight of Lady Ravenscroft under the trees, and sprang down as Eva and her mother came across the lawn to meet her. She wore a light summer driving coat, and a hat covered in brambles and wild roses. She smiled brightly under a wide white veil, advancing with a swinging gait.

They were standing by the lake.

"How cool—how ideal you looked in the delicious shade!" she cried. "And here is Sefton," as young Mr. Ravenscroft appeared. He had been listening for a voice and the sound of carriage wheels. She glanced merrily at him with those very open audacious eyes, which had already worked havoc among many of the susceptible rougher sex. She drew a brown driving glove off her right hand. Sefton's signet ring was on her second finger—evidence of the so-called "understanding." He had bought the diamond engagement ring, but Lady Norah was not yet allowed to accept it.

"Did you come over alone?" he asked, luring her away from Lady Ravenscroft on some trivial pretext.

"Yes—that is with Jennings, of course. He has taken the pony to the stables."

"You might have told me, and I would have fetched you. I thought your mother was coming."

"Oh! I am very independent. I go for miles alone. It is so nice to think, instead of talk. I am trying to train up my parents in the way they should go. I give them lectures on the necessity of freedom for the young. Give a mare her head, and she won't bolt. So take a warning, Sefton; when we are married don't try and hold me in, or the chances are I shall get the bit between my teeth, and then——"

Lady Norah gave a low whistle, and laughed one of her sweetest chimes, looking so adorable that her lover's heart beat wildly, and his eyes glowed as they rested on the flushed and rounded cheek.

She was as light-hearted as a child.

"Is that Eva's governess?" she asked.

"Where?"

"On the old tree stump by the lake," pointing to a figure in dull yellow.

"Yes; you know her, don't you?"

"Of course. We have often met, and she always gives me a shiver when I shake hands. I don't know why, unless that her palm is so fleshless, it is like clasping a thing of bone. I have a presentiment about that woman—something evil. See, she is coming towards us; what an odd slouching walk! How do you do, Miss Pluff?"

Lady Norah's tone changed as Georgina came within earshot, her gay, unaffected girlish manner contrasting with the governess's mechanical bow.

A conventional word on the weather and Miss Pluff passed, her lips compressed. She seemed like a woman moving in a waking dream. Her presence cast a momentary gloom over Lady Norah's evanescent spirits.

"Did you notice her face, Sefton? It was like a dead woman's."

"The result of a mustard gown," laughed the man. "Miss Pluff is a harmless, anæmic creature."

They were standing by the lake, Lady Norah looking down at her radiant reflection in the sunlight.

"What do you see in the water?" he asked, bending his head closer to hers.

"Two figures—mingling into one. Two figures destined for each other. Two lips—which meet!"

The last words were uttered with a little gasp as Sefton drew her to him.

"Are you happy, dearest?" he whispered.

"How can you ask? I don't suppose there is a more wildly happy and exultant being in the whole world. I am only afraid it is too good to last."

As she spoke Sefton's eyes fell on a gold chain bangle encircling her wrist.

"This is new," he said, touching it lightly.

"Yes," laughing up in his face; "an anonymous present from Captain Brooke."

Sefton's brow clouded.

"People always know who anonymous gifts come from," she continued, "at least, sensible people with guessing capacities. He was staying with us last week, and we made a daisy chain for fun, just to make believe that we were children. I wore it on my wrist until it faded. But he would not let me throw it away—he kept it. This chain is just the same size."

"Don't wear the thing," said Sefton, unfastening the clasp, "I hate the sight of it!"

Lady Norah drew away her hand with a reproving glance.

"That is just where your awful and horrible jealousy comes in," she said, shaking the roses and brambles at him seriously. "You should try and cure yourself, because it is such a stupid, childish fault."

"But you won't give the bangle up even to please me?"

"No," speaking decidedly. "I have a right to make a friend, and Captain Brooke has never said a word that even *you* could complain of."

The sunshine seemed to fade out of Sefton's morning.

"Very well," he said between his teeth; "do as you like."

Lady Norah turned away, and walked slowly towards the house. Sefton followed, ill at ease and sad.

"Was it an unkind action?" she wondered, fastening the open clasp. "A bangle was such a little thing; Sefton could not *really* mind." But all through lunch she was haunted by a string of familiar words: "You sow an action, you reap a habit; you sow a habit, you reap a character; you sow a character, and reap a destiny!"

When the dog-cart came round to take her home, Sefton announced his intention of driving to Rosemont with her, and walking back.

"It's such a long way," she said deprecatingly, "and I am sure you will be tired. Besides, I have to go back by the station to meet a friend." She coloured as she spoke.

"Is Captain Brooke coming down again?" asked Sefton quite casually.

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Lady Norah owned that he was, and Mr. Ravenscroft declared that, perhaps, after all, it was too warm to walk, and saw her off with a mist before his eyes.

"Poor dear Sefton!" she thought, "it does him good to be teased sometimes. It would never do to let him know how utterly and hopelessly I adore him. He would become a perfect tyrant."

Nevertheless she felt strangely dull and miserable driving away through the green lanes, and more than once longed instinctively for Sefton.

Captain Brooke looked train-weary and out of sorts, though he brightened considerably at the sight of Lady Norah.

She noticed he glanced at the bangle, and talked aimlessly of daisy chains.

That evening, while Captain Brooke was smoking on the verandah with her brother, Lady Norah was summoned to her father's room.

Lord Cannington did not often interfere with his daughter, who had her own way in most things, and was generally considered the wilful pet of the house. But when he spoke his word was law. In his own domain Lord Cannington was an autocrat, and even Lady Norah trembled before his frown.

"What could he have to say to her in private?" she wondered with a vague misgiving.

She found her father waiting with a fretful smile that was meant to be kind. He patted her shoulder and hesitated before speaking. Then, clearing his throat, came straight to the point.

"You go with Lady Cannington to Worboise Manor to-morrow."

"Tell me, Norah, my dear, you don't really care for young Sefton Ravenscroft; not enough to break your heart if the marriage were impossible?"

The girl raised her eyes to his full of mute terror and astonishment, her cheeks blanched, and she moved a step back to free her shoulder from his hand.

"*Care!* Father, how can you ask?" twisting the signet ring upon her finger nervously round and round. "Of course, I love him. Have I not promised to be his wife?"

"Yes, yes," speaking impatiently, "and how many others were you as ready to promise, and remain faithful to for a week—perhaps a month? You have a remarkable facility for changing your mind, and I wish you to do so with regard to young Ravenscroft."

Norah stared at him incredulously.

"But I can't," she said, with moist eyes and dry lips. "It has gone too far; besides—there is no reason."

She steadied herself against Lord Cannington's desk.

"We will pass over the reason," muttered her father testily.

"No," she replied, her breath coming quick and fast; "out of common justice I must hear it."

"Well, well, don't excite yourself; no man is worth it. Listen calmly, and I will explain; only, mind you, not a word to anyone. It isn't often I trust a girl not to chatter, but you say you care for the fellow, so I'll take the risk. I alone happen to *know* that the Ravenscroft family stand in peril of immediate ruin. So far the state of Sir Reginald's affairs has been kept secret, but any day the catastrophe may be made public property. His son will be a pauper. You are not openly engaged, but think, Norah, how far better it will look for you to throw him over *now* than afterwards. Come, take a sensible view of the case, and for once be led by your elders. Write a letter to-night, and banish the matter from your mind. We can't have *you* throwing yourself away."

Lady Norah was silent. To her, poverty held terrors innumerable. She had been brought up to regard wealth as the chief object of matrimony, to marry a poor man was a social crime, suicidal and impossible. Yet she had learnt at last to love. Men had been her sport since she was sixteen, now that her heart had gone out to meet Sefton Ravenscroft's, now that she had tasted the very wine of life, the worldly teaching of her youth stepped in, to deny her lips that intoxicating draught!

Cruel, inexorable fate! She stood staring at her father like an image of stone, trembling before his stronger will; the free will, which is the pivot on which man's complex nature turns, the will that places him above the lower creation, making him a little god upon the earth.

"Is it—quite—true?" she gasped at last.

Lord Cannington seized the opportunity to strengthen his argument. He was a shrewd, clever man, and few girls of Lady Norah's age and temperament would have failed to be "talked round."

So long as everything was made easy she smiled, and danced through life heedlessly, but when the necessity arose to assert herself, and combat misfortune, she sank beneath the load tearful, yet unresisting.

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Before the interview ended she had written the letter under her father's eye, shaken by low sobs, sealed it with Lord Cannington's seal, and fled weeping from his presence, to cry out her heart in her own room.

What did it mean? Marie, her maid—*packing!*

"*Mais oui, Mademoiselle,*" in reply to a half incoherent question, "you go with Lady Cannington to Worboise Manor to-morrow."

The floor seemed slipping from under Norah's feet.

Marie handed her a silver bottle of salts.

"Mademoiselle is *triste?*"

At that moment "Mademoiselle's" eyes fell on the gold chain round her wrist. She tore it off, as if the contact stung her quivering flesh, and flung it with a dramatic gesture through the window.

"Go, Marie," she said, "and if you find that hateful thing, keep it, but never let *me* see it again."

The maid hurried below, anxious to recover the bauble.

Norah's second finger was ringless, but she pressed it to her lips, and kissed the dent upon it.

Her brain, her blood, her whole body and soul were in a fever and ferment.

What had she done? What had that urgent, stern, yet persuasive parent driven her to? She tried to recall the words of her letter, the heartless, lying note, which pleaded a worn out affection. No tear-stain betrayed the truth, she had cast out her love, killed her heart, henceforth the beauty of life must fade and wane.

The world claimed her, the terrible world of wealth, whose god is gold, and whose creed money, power, luxury, ease! She writhed upon her bed, and beat the pillows. It had crushed her and mastered her, the wide-mouthed devourer of souls. She could no longer bask in the sunshine of love, and play on youth's fair hills, for she had fallen unawares into the cavern that lay beneath the flowers, she could only dream of the heights, and wander bereaved in the depths.

That night Lord Cannington had a dream. He thought that the unknown powers placed two human lives in his hands—to use at his will—one was that of a man, the other of a woman.

"What can I do with them?" he asked. "I will throw them together, and they will solve the problem themselves."

And when these strange living creatures met they clung to each other in a fond embrace.

"The woman has fair hair and green eyes," whispered a voice. "Can't you see it is your daughter Norah?"

So he snatched her back and held her away, and bade the unseen spirit at his side take the man and hurl him into hell.

"For Norah," he said, "will never find him there."

A chorus of weird, unholy mirth greeted this assertion.

"Women can always reach the home of sinners," mocking voices cried. "Leave this man in the world, curse him, and brand him with the taint of *Poverty*, write it about his doors and upon his person. Then your daughter is safe indeed!"

And when Lord Cannington woke he was numb with cold, though the breath of the summer night came in warm waves through the open window.

CHAPTER III.

Sir Reginald Ravenscroft was alone in his room. His face ashen, his eyes sleepless, haggard, and wild, with a real yet unspoken terror he walked slowly to and fro.

Could he trust himself to see Georgina—*his* Georgina—once again? or would the power of her fascination master the decision he had made in the still hours, alone?

The fear of life overcame his horror of death; he weighed them on the scale of his unhinged intellect; and the vague hereafter appealed to his racked brain and tortured conscience with soothing unreality.

If it might only be sleep—sleep through endless ages of restless time—if the soul might slumber on, on, in peace. Yet something told him it was not so, and then he shrank in tremulous alarm.

No wonder Sir Reginald Ravenscroft stood aghast and reluctant—half persuaded of the soul's immortality, yet clinging to the hope of annihilation. Involuntarily his parched lips muttered the appalling penalty incurred by man through disobedience: "It is appointed to him once to die, and after that the judgment."

He ceased pacing the floor, and stood as one transfixed, gazing through the open window.

He had asked his wife to leave him in solitude, that he might sleep. Little she guessed the thoughts that were ensnaring his soul, and urging it on to eternal doom.

The evil spirits that attack the weak, had glided noiselessly into the very chambers of his heart, to blind his reason, and pervert his will. He could no longer wrestle against them, as he looked back on the gorgeous yet fleeting treasures of wealth, honour, and reputation, all gone, crumbled to dust under his feet. His corrupted affections and debased reason remained the lusts and passions that worked his own destruction, while sins long accumulating had eventually provoked the vengeance they deserved. Yes, he could no longer blind his eyes, this was the climax, this the end! He had tempted God, his career had been checked and crushed. It was time to go. Suddenly as he watched the sunset fading and remembered how only the night before Georgina stood beside him, pouring forth her love, a revival of his apparently dead principle leapt into life. As though to make up for its long torpor, it arose with the resistlessness of a fury, sweeping all the clogged recesses of memory, making each slighted warning and base misdoing sting like the bite of a fiery serpent on his soul.

In a frenzy he seized pen and paper, writing one last fond line to his wife:

"Forgive me, dearest, if you can. There is, alas! no other way. They say that only cowards commit suicide, but I maintain it takes a brave man to die. Tell our son to guard well the good old name, on which, had I lived, I should have brought dishonour. God bless you and the two dear children. Good-bye."

He placed the hurried writing in an envelope, addressed it to Lady Ravenscroft, and laid it on the blotter.

Then he went out quietly, meeting Eva on the stairs.

He kissed her passionately as she passed, declared his head was better, and he was going out.

"Shall I come, too?" she asked. "I am just running up to fetch Miss Pluff."

"Miss Pluff!"

He winced at the name.

"No, no, girlie! I—I would rather be alone."

Eva, leaning over the banisters, watched his steady step as he descended.

"Yes," she thought, "father is better. But I wonder why he looked at me so strangely and kissed me—oh, as if—as if he were never going to see me again."

Then she went silently to the schoolroom, determined Miss Pluff should not follow her father into the garden.

"Lady Norah has gone," she said, joining her governess. "Didn't she look *sweet* at lunch? Sefton never took his eyes off her, and ate nothing. That is 'being in love,' I suppose. He wanted to drive home with her, but she put him off. Something about a Captain Brooke and the station. Sefton looked awfully wild, and has hardly spoken since. I think it was rather mean of her, don't you?"

Miss Pluff was not sufficiently interested in Lady Norah or Sefton to offer an opinion.

"Is your father better?" she asked.

"Yes."

Miss Pluff had just caught sight of the tall, spare figure walking towards the shrubbery.

"Shall we go out in the garden, Eva?"

"If you like; only we must not follow father. He does not want to be disturbed."

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Miss Pluff drew in her lips.

"I am sure mother doesn't know he's down. She is with Sefton in the boudoir. I think I'll go and tell her."

"I should advise you to do nothing of the sort; if your father wanted Lady Ravenscroft he could quite well have fetched her himself. When people's nerves are unhinged they are often cross and irritable, better left alone."

"Father is *never* cross," said Eva indignantly.

But Miss Pluff kept her pupil upstairs.

As Sir Reginald wandered alone in the gloomy shrubbery, his hand pressed upon something cold, he longed instinctively for human aid. Why had not his wife found the letter and rushed to stop him from his deadly deed?

But no, his fate was definitely planned—the hour had come.

Even as the thought flashed through his brain, Lady Ravenscroft was stealing on tiptoe to his door. She pushed it softly open and looked in.

Eva, leaning over the banisters, watched his steady step as he descended.

The bed, the sofa, were alike tenantless. Her husband was not lying down.

She entered the room surprised at his absence. The chair by the writing-table was pushed back, papers lay scattered broadcast, a pen had been left point downwards in the ink-pot.

Her eyes fell on the letter addressed to herself.

A horrible foreboding crept over Lady Ravenscroft. What could it mean? Why did he write to *her*?

She opened it with fingers that trembled in spite of herself, the words danced before her eyes. She looked round wildly, her blood freezing with terror, trying to cry out. Then rushing to the door her strangled voice broke forth: "*Sefton! Sefton! Help—quick! Your father!*"

The report of a gun sounded on the tranquil air, like a death-knell to her hopes.

"My God!" she cried, tottering forward, "he has done it!"

"Mother, what is the matter?" Sefton was by her side.

"Lady Ravenscroft is ill!" It was Miss Pluff's voice behind her.

"Who is shooting in the shrubbery?"

Eva's question gave her speech. "Reggie!" she muttered hoarsely. "He—he—has killed himself!"

With one accord they ran towards the spot whence the sound had come, Sefton ahead, Eva clinging to her mother's skirts, Miss Pluff alone—apart. Her hands were tightly clenched, her eyes starting from her head, her breast heaving with ill-concealed emotion.

"He would never do it," she said. "He had not the courage."

Sefton stopped suddenly, and sank upon his knees, as if to hide the terrible sight from his mother.

There lay Sir Reginald, ghastly and bloodstained, upon the moss and undergrowth, his head against a knot of roots, his hands flung back above his shoulder, his body contorted by the last grim struggle. Lady Ravenscroft viewed it in mute misery and speechless horror, involuntarily placing her hands over Eva's eyes, while she pressed the frightened child to her breast. It was the girl's arms that prevented her falling, as the two swayed together under the trees.

Then in the awful and solemn silence that fell upon their grief, a wild shriek rent the air, while Miss Pluff brushed past Sefton in her mustard dress, and sank upon the earth by the dead man's head.

Scream after scream, piercing and blood curdling, broke from her lips. She beat her brow with her hands, rocking herself to and fro in a paroxysm of hysterical, uncontrollable despair. Her tears streamed down and fell on Sir Reginald's damp hair; her face was hardly recognisable so distorted had it grown from anguish.

Her cries brought the whole household rushing to the spot—grooms, gardeners, men servants, all with white, scared faces, while the maids followed at a distance, whispering of murder in the gloom.

Mrs. Leslie, the housekeeper, advanced in rustling silk, and grasped the situation at a glance. The master was lying dead; the poor dear mistress, half fainting and stunned by the blow, stood, supported by her children, at the foot of that grim body; while Miss Pluff, the governess, moaned, shrieked and wailed, kissing him and crying over Sir Reginald's mutilated head. The shocking fatality of this sudden and mysterious death hardly horrified the good woman more than the sight of that presumptuous female, parading her grief in the face of Lady Ravenscroft.

Sefton turned to Mrs. Leslie with a pleading, piteous glance.

"Get her away, for mercy's sake; she is mad!"

Miss Pluff was conscious of a firm hand on her arm; someone drew her up sharply to her feet, and hurried her off against her will. Once she tried to dart back, but her intention was somewhat roughly frustrated by the buxom woman at her side.

"He's dead!" groaned Georgina. "Oh, my love—my life!"

Mrs. Leslie shook her with ill-natured vehemence, considering she was almost too weak to stand.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, and before my lady, too! As brazen and scandalous a scene to make as ever I saw over a poor dead gentleman! Who are you, I should like to know, to make his memory a talk among the servants? They won't have much to say for *your* character after this evening."

Miss Pluff listened dazed and stupefied. Her hysterical fit was subsiding under Mrs. Leslie's open reproaches, though she still wailed of her love in a spasmodic undertone.

"Who murdered him?" asked the housekeeper shrewdly, glancing round, as if expecting to see assassins hiding among the trees.

Miss Pluff shivered.

"I—I don't know, but he was cold. His dear eyes looked

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into mine, and their stare was glazed! Oh! how can I bear the bitter—bitter years to come?"

Mrs. Leslie set her lips, and still retaining Miss Pluff's arm, marched her on like a gaoler with a prisoner.

"Poor Mr. Sefton, he *did* look at you, as much as to say: 'Well there, who'd have thought it!'"

"You are a very cruel, unfeeling woman," hissed the governess, suddenly waking up to the realisation of the housekeeper's "insults," as she afterwards termed them. "You have evidently never known what it is to have your heart torn out, to suffer as I do to-day."

"No, thank the Lord. I have always kept myself respectable!"

They had reached the house, and Miss Pluff was conducted to her room, where she flung herself on the bed, and lay staring at the ceiling, with hands clasped on her breast, and limbs rigid.

Mrs. Leslie left her in disgust, declaring her affectation was past endurance, and anxious to return to the stricken widow and weeping, frightened child.

What passed in Miss Pluff's mind that night only herself and her conscience knew.

But sleep came not, and as she counted the hours she planned her future skilfully while still sobbing for the dead.

Sir Reginald had kindled a violent passion in Georgina's soul that left her hardened and resentful! The world was against her, and she against the world. Henceforth battle, conflict, strife!

Scruples? She had none. They should be buried with all that was good of her in the late baronet's grave.

So she laughed, and cried, and sobbed, till the morning light revealed the havoc caused by these oceans of tears.

Her face looked old and swollen; her eyes were weak, watery, almost sightless. As she viewed the sickening apparition in the mirror, she struck the glass with the back of her brush, in a fit of painful rage. It shivered and cracked from top to bottom. Georgina staggered back, sick with superstitious dread. She could not have explained the action, it seemed as if an inward power had moved her hand against her will.

"It is fate," she said. "I must fight that now." Then turning to the broken glass she addressed it in a hoarse whisper: "I challenge you, do your worst, I am not afraid."

* * * * *

A mounted messenger left a note.

Half the night Sefton sat by his mother's bed, holding her feverish hand, bathing the burning forehead and comforting her as best he could. He was gentle and considerate as a woman, no trained nurse could have tended Lady Ravenscroft with greater patience and skill. He soothed the desperate torrent of her grief, just as if his own heart was not tortured with fears, aching with pent-up sorrow, lacerated by the agony of bereavement.

He dared not ask himself what that letter meant, hinting darkly at disgrace, nor venture to suggest a reason for his father's self-sought death.

When at last she fell asleep, he crept softly from the room to listen at Eva's door.

He could hear a deep sigh, then a sob, and fretful tossing from side to side. He went in, and kneeling down, clasped the shuddering little figure in his strong arms, and whispered that she must be strong, "for mother's sake."

But not till he was alone did his manly frame break down before that human weakness, and shed in secret the tears which must fall for a parent's lost soul!

In the morning a mounted messenger left a note addressed to Sefton Ravenscroft, Esq.

It was the final drop in his bitter cup—the letter and the signet ring from Lady Norah.

(To be continued.)

BRAIN GYMNASIUM: RESULT of No. 7 Competition.

Of the competitors who entered for this competition, not one succeeded in solving all the problems. Mr. F. Clements, 15, St. Mary's Road, Queen's Road, Peckham; and Mr. J. R. Morrison, 18, Silver Street, Aberdeen, are the highest in the list, having a total of 9½, and to each of them a guinea has been forwarded. Penknives have been sent to the competitors whose names and addresses appear below.

J. R. Traill Hill, 3, Merchant Street, Peterhead; B. C. Smythe, St. Anne's House, Lewes; T. Tanner, 74, Hampton Park, Bristol; H. Coles, 37 Walnut Street, Southport; S. Vickers, 96, Bold Street, Liverpool; F. Bessant, 15, Eaton Place, Falmouth; E. Wakeford, 29, St. Agnes Place, Kennington; J. G. Usher, Baltinglass, Wicklow; Mrs. M. E. Mennie, 99, Queen Street, Peterhead, N.B.; Miss Erskine, 2, Chapel Street, Peterhead; C. B. Keston, 11, Queen's Road, Bayswater; A. Ross, 29, Pomarium Street, Perth, Scotland; H. Percival, 14, Denmark Road, Moss Side, Manchester; J. Gillespie, 105, St. Michael Street, Dumfries; J. Adams, The Cottage, The Heath, Crayford, Kent; Miss E. Champ, 16, Prospect Hill, Walthamstow; G. Adams, West View, Sharrow, Sheffield; G. W. Smith, 57, Longton Grove, Sydenham; C. H. Jones, 23, Musgrave Crescent, Walham Green; A. W. Rowl, New Road, Lower Edmonton; C. Royelle, 9, Grand Junction Parade, Brighton; Miss A. Vincent, 16, Crowhurst Road, Brixton, S.W.; Miss D. Putton, The Links, Ascot; R. Ellis, 16, Western Road, Hove, Brighton; W. J. Barter, 38, Douglas Street, Cork, Ireland.

KEY OF No. 7 COMPETITION.

No. 61.
S—nuff.
U—nder.
P—estle.
E—ver.
B—ain.
F—ool.
I—nk.
N—ot.
E—el.

The Result of the Picture Puzzle Competition will appear next week.

No. 62.

The snore, the snore, the beautiful snore,
Filling the casement from ceiling to floor,
Over the counterpane, under the sheet.
From her dainty head to her tiny feet.

No. 63.

L O I N.
O N C E.
I C E S.
N E S T.

No. 64.

a=m. e=f. i=l. o=n. u=s. l=a. h=k.

No. 65.

At 3.32 p.m. on Saturday, July 4th.

No. 66.

MULTIDENTATE.

M itigat E
U nkep T
L lam A
T urbo T
I rreligio N
D isput E

No. 67.—Orphanotrophy.

No. 68.

"Fitalubeu" or "beautiful"; value, £11 1s. 1½d.

No. 69.

Some of the best anagrams were:
A better felt hat. Fate! Better halt. That beater left.

No. 70.—65 times.

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"WAITER, AN ABSINTHE FRAPPÉE."

The Crime Confessed in a Club.

"We both loved her," my strange acquaintance continued gloomily, setting down his glass and leaning his elbow heavily upon the table, he, calmly and sedately, after his wonted manner, I, feverishly and furiously, in my way. She was worthy of any man's love. She was pure and sweet, and her cheeks were like white rose leaves.

"She favoured me; I knew that, and so did he; so did the old man, her father, he of the millions. It was this which led to the trouble between the old man and my hated rival, the nephew; the old man seemed to hold him responsible for losing the girl's affections, and was consequently enraged, because he wished the two to marry. He was always choleric and violent in his tantrums, and the night they quarrelled he was particularly so.

"Waiter, an *absinthe frappée*."

It was the third he had ordered. He drank doggedly, as suited his mood. Every drink seemed to intensify the desperate look in his eyes and the harsh expression about his lips.

Having quenched his inordinate thirst, he continued:

"I overheard part of the trouble, as did the servants in the house. The two were in the library, and the old man was storming in a loud voice. I had called at the house unknown to them, and was in the drawing-room where, standing alone near the door which led to the library, I could hear everything.

"Finally, the young man got up and went out, saying in his exasperatingly calm voice: 'You will think better of your words to-morrow.'

"'Curse you, I will not!' shouted the old man, and then a door closed gently, and I knew that he was alone.

"But still he kept on talking noisily to himself, condemning everybody to everlasting perdition—me, in particular. I heard him get up presently and go to the sideboard where he kept his liquors. Then he returned and settled himself in his chair before the fire, and I knew that he was preparing for his evening siesta. He always nodded an hour or two in his chair before he went to bed. Gradually his mutterings grew fainter, and after a time I ceased to hear his voice altogether. Then, by listening closely, I could hear his heavy breathing, and I knew that he was asleep.

"Now, it occurred to me, would be a good time to kill him. I had never before thought of murder, and the idea disturbed me somewhat, as you may believe. But there were reasons—pressing ones at that—why I wished him dead. My office as assistant prosecuting attorney of the city had cost me all the money I had saved from my practice, and the income it yielded me was not sufficient to supply all my wants. So, while I loved the daughter, I wanted the father's money, and there was only one way to get it—by putting him out of the way. Once out of the way, I would speedily effect a marriage and come into his millions.

"I reasoned out the plan well, as I stood there in the shadow of the curtains. It would be so easy to open the connecting door, steal into the library, cut the old man's throat, then steal out again and leave the house. When the crime was discovered—ha! the nephew would be charged with it! The servants would testify to his presence in the library, to the quarrel, to all the incriminating circumstances. And I—how could I be suspected? I was supposed to have left the house an hour before. Then, my position—an officer of the great city, a prosecutor of criminals, a man in whom the public had perfect confidence. *I* suspected? Never! and if I were, did I not have the legal machinery of the city at my command? Why, I knew secrets to ruin half the judges in town! They would not dare to convict me!

"'So,' I said, 'I will kill him.' I took a knife from my pocket, opened it, and tested the blade. It was very sharp. Then, with the greatest care, I opened the door, slowly, very slowly, lest I should wake the old man. He was in just the position I had pictured him, reclining in his great easy-chair before the fire, asleep, with his head on his bosom. You can imagine my feeling of exultation as I noted his helplessness. Waiter, an *absinthe frappée!*"

He waited moodily for the drink to be brought him, and said nothing more until it was drunk. Then he pursued his narrative.

"I stole cautiously to his side, and, with one swift stroke severed his jugular. He did not so much as moan. Then I retraced my steps and closed the door. The whole episode had not occupied a minute.

"As I passed out into the hall I encountered the nephew. We stared coldly at each other, and I hastened on out to the street.

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"The next morning the newspapers were full of the crime. My rival had been arrested!

"I was happy. I hurried to the house, and offered my condolence to the bereaved daughter. She was almost prostrated with grief, and I alone could comfort her.

"When the day of trial came, I was on hand with my evidence against the prisoner. As assistant district attorney, it was my duty to prosecute him. He sat before the justice with that same maddening calmness that was habitual with him, and when our eyes met he gave me a look which aroused my hatred to the depths. It was full of consciousness of his own innocence, of challenge to me to do my worst, of assurance that *I* was the murderer. Yes, he knew the truth; I saw that instantly. But what did it profit him? What could he prove? Nothing. He was in the toils, and I was free to bind those toils more firmly about him.

"I would convict him. For my own welfare it was necessary, and I swore a mental oath that he should not escape. It is not easy to convict a man on circumstantial evidence; but my case was a strong one, while the defence was weak. As the trial proceeded, I felt that victory was certain. In my speech before the jury, I spun a web of incriminating evidence about him from which no amount of legal ingenuity could extricate him. I spoke of his unsuccessful attempt to win the murdered man's daughter, of the quarrel in the library, of the fact that within an hour after the murder was discovered, of the inheritance which the nephew had reason to expect at the death of his uncle. The argument was overwhelming. It was the strongest speech I ever made, and all the while he sat looking at me in that calm, accusing manner, that made me wish for a chance to cut his throat, too.

"The verdict was 'Guilty.'

"I think it surprised him. Serene in his innocence, he had not believed it possible to fix the crime upon him. He had underestimated my powers. 'Now,' I said to myself, 'he will be executed, and his portion of the old man's money will come to me.' How I rejoiced over my triumph! You will not drink? Waiter, an *absinthe frappée!*"

I was beginning to have a horror of the man—aye, and to fear him, for under the influence of his copious libations, his face had assumed an expression which, while almost fascinating, was yet dangerous and repulsive. Was he telling me the truth? If so, he was a veritable monster. I marvelled that he had made a confidant of me, since we were practically strangers. Perhaps he was crazy? No, he did not have the appearance of an insane man. My speculations were cut short by his resumption of his strange story:

"It was the night before my marriage. I sat in my room meditating, when there came a knock at the door and the man whom I had convicted of my own crime entered. He had escaped from the prison.

"I did not rise from my chair, but sat still, looking up at him. I cannot say that I was surprised to see him, for something had told me he would come.

"'Well?' I said; adding, 'if you are cold sit by the fire, and we will talk over the situation.'

"He drew up his chair, and sat down facing me, all the time watching me narrowly.

"'I must be very cautious,' he said, 'the police are doubtless looking for me by this time.'

"'Do you think *this* a safe place?' I asked.

"'I am taking chances,' he replied, shrugging his shoulders. 'I want to talk with you. I have something of importance to say.'

"'I suppose you wish to reproach me, or threaten me,' I ventured.

"'Oh, no,' he said carelessly, 'you did only what any villain would have done under the circumstances—that is—assuming that he was clever enough. You are very shrewd. You know, I did not expect to be convicted, although I saw everything going against me. But I had no proof against you, *then*, so what could I do?'

"'Sure enough, what could you do?' said I. 'You have proof against me now, then?'

"'What's more important,' he rejoined, 'I have the will.'

"'The deuce!' I exclaimed, 'that accounts for it's not being found.'

"'So it does,' said he. 'Now, what do you suppose the will decrees?—that the money and property shall be equally divided between the daughter and me, provided—notice the provision—that we marry within six months after his death! in case we fail to marry, for any reason whatsoever, except death, the estate is to be distributed among other relatives and charities.'

"I uttered an oath. 'That's a nice state of things,' I added.

"'Yes,' he replied, 'the old man was always crazy, and this piece of business is characteristic.'

"'But the daughter could break the will,' I suggested.

"'No,' said he. 'She is not his daughter. She is only an adopted daughter, and not legally adopted at that.'

"'Now, this *is* serious,' said I, as I got up and paced the floor. 'Will you have something to drink?'

"'Thank you,' he answered, filling the glass I extended him. Waiter, an *absinthe frappée!*"

I watched his eyes as he waited for the drink to be brought him. They were positively baleful, and green—exactly the colour of the absinthe. "After all," I said to myself, "he is insane." Suddenly he resumed:

"'What effect on the case would your death have?' I asked him.

"'This will provides that in the event of the death of either of us before the marriage can occur, the survivor shall inherit all.'

"'Then,' said I, 'the case is just this: If I marry the girl to-morrow night, with you alive, I marry a pauper; if I marry her with you dead, I marry a millionaire heiress?'

"'Exactly,' said he.

"'Have you the will with you?' I asked. 'It might be destroyed.'

"'Unfortunately,' he replied, somewhat sarcastically, 'my lawyer probated it this afternoon. Now,' he went on, 'I have a proposition to make you: If you will go with me to the girl and confess the crime, in order that I may be placed in her esteem and marry her, I will give you two million francs.'

"'Impossible!' I declared; 'you would be re-arrested at once. Besides, I love her.'

"'So do I,' said he, 'and I will take all chances of being apprehended.'

"'Impossible!' I said again. 'She loves me. She would not marry you. The only feasible solution of this problem is for you to die within the next twenty-four hours.'

"'It certainly looks that way,' he admitted.

"'Don't you see,' I continued, 'that you are standing in the way of the girl's happiness? She loves me, and is happy in the prospect of marrying me to-morrow night. In case anything happened to prevent her, her disappointment would be great; likewise the loss of the

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fortune she believes to be hers. Now, if you love her, and desire her happiness, why do you not yield to circumstances and get out of the way? You are under sentence to die a month hence; what difference can a month make to you? You have nothing to live for, you can accomplish no good in that time, whereas if you die at once, your demise will vastly benefit both of us. Come, be generous!'

"'You would suggest, then,' he said, 'that I commit suicide?'

"'Capital!' I asserted; 'or, for that matter, I could kill you.'

"'But that would get you into trouble,' he smiled; 'you might fail to escape so cleverly as you did before. Then the whole plan would be baulked.'

"'True,' I returned; 'I agree with you that suicide is better. What do you say, then? Remember it is for *her* sake.'

"The appeal had its effect. He sat thinking the situation over for some time, and finally said:

"'You have got me in a very bad position. While knowing that my fate should be yours, by rights, I yet am wholly without power to compass your punishment without utterly destroying the peace of mind of her I love. Then, should I try to fasten the crime of which I stand convicted upon you, whatever proofs of your guilt I might offer, you would probably beat me and send me to the gallows; I had much rather die by my own hand, in the free air of heaven, than be executed by the warden of a prison.'

"'Sensible!' I commented.

"'I am liable to be recaptured at any minute,' he went on, in the same philosophic tone. 'I am not good at dodging the sleuthhounds of the law. Once recaptured, I am doomed to the noose. All in all, suicide seems the best way out of the difficulty. There is one thing, however, which you must promise me; will you take good care of her and make her happy?'

"'By all means,' I responded.

"'Then it is settled,' said he; 'I will die before this time to-morrow night.' He arose and went to the door. 'Good-night,' he added in farewell.

"'Good-night,' I returned, and he went out.

"'He is an obliging sort,' I said to myself. 'I should like to know if he means to keep his word.'

"I donned my coat and hat, thinking to follow him; but when I reached the street he was nowhere in sight.

"The next morning I read in the papers that the escaped murderer had been found with a bullet in his brain, in a small side street of the town, not dead, but seriously wounded and unconscious. He had been taken to a hospital.

"'Confound him! to bungle the job!' I thought.

"Then I went to the office of the probate clerk and examined the will. One passage in the singular document exercised me considerably. 'If, within six months after my death,' it read, 'either of the two individuals named marries a third person—except it be *after* the death of the other—all the property aforesaid shall be distributed to the aforesaid charities.' 'The dickins!' I said, exasperated, 'if he is not dead by eight o'clock to-night every penny is lost.'

"I made it a point to tell the bride nothing of what had happened. Busy with her preparations for the wedding, she did not look at the newspaper, and it was not until some days later that she was informed of her cousin's action. I spent most of the afternoon in the big house I was soon to be master of, and I remember how very sweet and happy she was.

"At six o'clock, just as it was growing dark, I visited the hospital to see the convict patient. He was not dead yet, I was informed; indeed, it was thought he would recover.

"I was left alone with him for a few minutes. Finding him conscious, I took advantage of the opportunity to explain to him the necessity of his dying before eight o'clock, the time set for the wedding.

"He readily agreed with me that no time was to be lost if his laudable purpose was to succeed, and suggested that I put an end to him then and there.

"'Can't you do it yourself?' said I, disliking the task.

"'Too weak,' he responded.

"I saw there was no help for it, so I prepared to do his bidding. 'I am sorry,' I said, 'but you see how it is. It's a great pity you didn't aim a little better.'

"'So it is,' said he.

"'Good-bye,' I said, and shook his hand. 'I'll not find any fault with you. You have won my hearty respect as it is.'

"Then I quickly pressed the pillow over his face, and when I took it away he was dead.

"I hastened to call an attendant, and then left the place to dress for my wedding. Waiter, another *absinthe frappée*."

My thoughts were by this time past description. The man seemed to me the very incarnation of evil. I was in a cold perspiration, and shuddered at the very sound of his voice.

"The wedding was quiet, but magnificent," he went on—"that is, the presents were many and costly, and those in attendance were all notables of the fashionable world—intimate friends, you know."

He hesitated for a few moments, sipping the emerald liquid absently. Then he threw the glass to the floor, and rose unsteadily to his feet, while his face was bent over the table until his tainted breath scorched my cheek:

"That was five years ago," he exclaimed. "Since then I have spent five million francs, mostly in absinthe! I swim in a sea of absinthe! I love it—I hate it, and I drink, drink, drink! As for *her*—oh, she died last night, drunk with absinthe! I taught her to drink it, and I'm proud of it! I've spent to-night the last penny I've got to my name, and I'm happy, because I, too, am drunk with absinthe! I'll never have enough money to buy it again, so I'm going to die while I'm happy. Good-night, my friend."

He staggered out of the club and committed suicide within the hour. Whether or not the story he told me was true, I have never been able to discover.

LE VIER.

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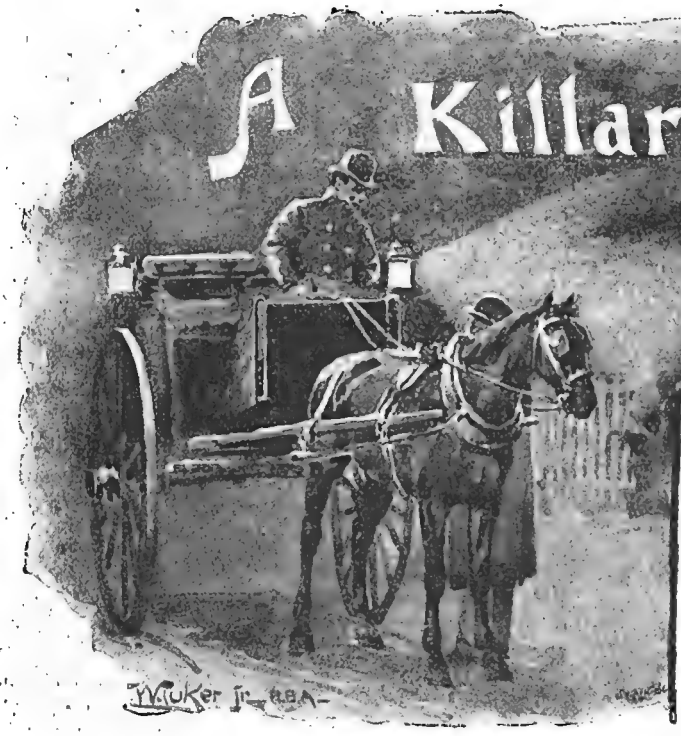
A Killarney Idyl.



Phelim McCaul was not in a particularly good humour as he strode along the rough, mountain path, whistling a faction tune between his teeth, and cutting savagely at the wayside brambles that shivered in the sharp east wind which, appropriately enough, was heralding the Lenten season down the famous Gap of Dunloe.

Judged from Mr. McCaul's standpoint, the situation was a tantalising one. Here he was, a man of thirty-four, with a tidy bit put by, a snug farm and no encumbrance whatever, actually unmarried this blessed Ash Wednesday Eve, and likely to remain so during the coming twelve months, all owing to the unreasonableness of one Thady O'Rafferty, whose daughter, Mollie, Phelim sought in marriage, the negotiations having been broken off that very evening for positively the last time.

Had Phelim been a trifle older, or a trifle more philosophic, he would have probably told himself the disappointment was simply a blessing in disguise, but being still young, and not at all a philosopher, he chafed fiercely at the broken match and heartily cursed Mr. O'Rafferty as he went.

Absorbed in bitter reflections, he did not hear the approaching rattle of gig wheels behind, and it was not until a friendly voice had thrice shouted his name from lungs rendered stentorian by mountain air, that Phelim knew he had a fellow traveller on the road. Thus challenged, he faced round, and recognising his interlocutor as an acquaintance named Lanigan, who rented a farm a mile or so from his own place, came to a halt.

"Yerrah, Phelim, boy, where are ye goin' at that rate this hour o' night?" asked the new-comer, accommodating his horse's pace to that of the young man as they moved forward together, "sure I thought 'tis down colloquing with Mollie O'Rafferty ye'd be this minnit instead of flyin' all over the county like thistle-down——"

"That's all off now!" replied Phelim sulkily, not well pleased at Lanigan's observation, but too true an Irishman to resist the temptation of chattering about his own affairs; "the mane little blaggard of a father wouldn't give a penny more than two hundred quid with the girl, an' he, after as good as promisin' three hundred a fortnight ago, an' I knowin' he had eight hundred lodged in the bank in Killarney!"

"Is it truth ye're tellin' me?"

"Oh, divil recave the lie, an' divil recave the ha'penny more he'd advance; an' I, after swearin' to his face I'd not marry any girl under five hundred!"

"Right y'are, I like your sperret——"

"Sure if I did, I'd be disgraced for ever—lavin' meself down like that, an' there's no fear me wife 'ud respect me either."

"Oh, begob, I suppose he thought that as ye were dacent ye'd the soft vein in ye too," commented the other, cracking his whip, "I suppose he believed that since Miss Mollie was at the convent for a year an' could play the pianny, the head 'ud be turned on yer shoulders."

"Faith, then he never made a bigger mistake in his life," retorted the rejected suitor, knitting his short, straight brows, "there's not such a differ between wan girl an' another as all that, an' 'twould take a keener man than Thady O'Rafferty to fool me anyway—himself an' his daughter, the cross-eyed——"

"I don't wonder at yer feelin' hurt," interposed Lanigan smoothly, as he reined up, for they had reached a spot where the road branched off in different directions, "but never say die, there's as good fish in the say as ever was caught, an' if ye're willin', ye can still be a married man this very Shrove!"

Phelim laughed bitterly, he was in no mood for wooing now.

"I have three daughters yonder," pursued the other, pointing in the direction of the undulating uplands rolling away to the heights beyond, where the Purple Mountain soared into the deepening twilight, "an' they hear tell of you, Phelim, though I don't know if any of 'em met you lately, for they're great stay-at-homes, but they have all a wish for you, an' I don't think 'twould be hard for ye to put the 'come hether' on any of 'em; so

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if ye're in earnest, Phelim McCaul, come along with me this blessid minnit, an I'll give you the pick of the three, an' I'll send across for Father Pat O'Hara—he's only a couple of fields away—an' he'll buckle ye in a jiffey, since the time is so short."

Phelim's darkening brow cleared a little; natural cunning was struggling with wounded pride, and that short-sighted longing for swift revenge which impels many a rejected wooer to fling himself away upon the first girl he meets, in order to enjoy the triumph of what is usually but a Pyrrhic victory—pride won.

"I'll go," he cried suddenly, wheeling round, "me father, God rest his soul, often said ye were a dacent man, an' sure the whole parish knows there isn't the dirty dhrop in any of ye!"

"Right you are, me bouchal," responded Mr. Lanigan promptly, "that's the talk, an' before long you'll have a chance of judgin' whether Thady O'Rafferty has all the nice girls in the country. So, just jump up here alongside o' me, an' we'll be over there like winkin'."

Phelim obeyed, and a quick trot along the winding road presently brought them to the group of white-washed outhouses surrounding Lanigan's cottage, whose lighted windows shone hospitably through a mountain mist.

Here the proprietor begged his prospective son-in-law to wait while he went in and explained matters to the girls.

"They're bashful, poor things, since they lost the mother," he remarked confidentially, "an' maybe they'd be a bit put out if they saw you comin' in on them all of a suddint."

To this arrangement Phelim made no objection, and Mr. Lanigan, hastily passing through the kitchen, went straight to the parlour where, as he expected, he found the three Misses Lanigan placidly engaged in knitting or sewing.

At the entrance of their parent the three young ladies rose to greet him, the eldest, Kitty, a girl with dove-like eyes, limping slightly as she crossed the room.

"Girls alive, don't be flustered," said Lanigan breathlessly. "Cissy, stir up the fire; be quiet, Peg, there's a young man outside lookin' for a wife, he must get married this Shrove, an' he's waitin' at the door."

"Who is he, eroo?" asked Peggy, the youngest.

"Spake aisy; Phelim McCaul," replied her father, with a nod, at once threatening and explanatory. "I'm goin' to give him the pick o' ye, an' 'tis a long time till ye get as good a chance again."

"Sure he's runnin' after Mollie O'Rafferty," interjected Cissy, pausing in her operation of sweeping the ashes under the grate.

"Yes, but that's all broke off now," answered Lanigan; "he's tearin' mad, an' 'ud marry the divil's daughter for satisfaction. Here, don't waste any more time, 'ramashin'' there, but sit down, all of ye, about the table, Kitty here, an' Cissy at that side, an' you, Peg, at this, an' don't ye get up when he comes in, or lave on to be surprised, but be nice an' pleasant to him, for I said ye were all 'gone' after him, be jabers."

And silencing the titter with which the young ladies took their places, he hurried out to Phelim, who, when he was introduced a few minutes later, found the maidens demurely seated in the positions indicated by their fond parent.

There was a decent interval filled by improving conversation, while Bridgie, the handmaid of the establishment, brought in materials for punch, and it was only

The three Misses Lanigan placidly engaged in knitting or sewing.

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when the tumblers were half emptied that Mr. Lanigan broached the subject which occupied the thoughts of all.

"Now Phelim McCaul," he said, rising and unconsciously imitating the manner of a gentleman he had once seen auctioneering cattle in Killarney, "these are my three girls, the same I was tellin' ye about. That's the eldest, Kitty, I'll give her five hundred pounds, dry money, and there's the second eldest, Cissy, and she has three hundred pounds to her name, an' here's Peggy, the youngest, an' the man who takes her now will have two hundred. So there you are, me bouchal, an' which of 'em will you choose?"

Mr. McCaul rapidly worked a little sum in mental

Kitty suspended toilette operations a moment.

arithmetic; naturally, he decided on the five hundred pound damsel, then he glanced carelessly at her face.

"I think, ser," he remarked deferentially, "I'll take the eldest young lady, if she'll have me. The other two are very nice indeed, an' it's not the first time I heard of 'em" (he was only dimly conscious of their existence until that evening), "but I think 'tis only proper to give her the refusin' of me."

There was a brief silence, a cinder fell from the glowing mass between the grate bars, Cissy tittered furtively, Peggy leant forward, her elbow upon the table, her dimpled chin crushed in the palm of her hand, watching the episode with the pitiless eyes of eighteen. Kitty sat perfectly still, but her demure mouth was lifted at the corners, and there was a light under her half-closed lids like the gleam of a knife loosened in its sheath.

The disinterested Phelim rose and approached her.

"Will you have me, miss?" he asked gently—perhaps at that exact instant he forgot the five hundred pounds; I hope he did.

Kitty's head sank lower, there came a spot of scarlet on her cheeks.

"Oh yes, indeed," she whispered.

"Begor, that settles it!" cried Lanigan, drawing a quick breath, "she's me own favourite child, the first of the clutch, Phelim, an' I say it without any shame to the others, you've got the pick of the bunch. Sure, I don't know what we'll do at all, at all, without her; but, anyway, I'm glad she's settled, and has a good husband, an' since she was to go, there isn't wan I'd rather have her before your own self. Take her, an' God bless ye, an' may the first boy be a bishop! Cissy, girl, run an' get up the tea, help your sister Peggy avick, while Phelim an' meself settle a little bit o' business here as our heads are cool."

And over-ruling a very faint protest on Mr. McCaul's part, he drew the young man into a corner, where a little old-fashioned cabinet stood, and presently both men were deep in the examination of a bank book, greasy with long use, and also a mysterious ledger which the girls knew to be opened only upon the most momentous occasions.

Meanwhile, a sumptuous meal was hastily prepared, sumptuous according to the ideas of people whose fathers had been obliged to hide their prosperity as other men hide their crimes, and ere long the welcome sound of sizzling bacon and the "pat" of the tossed pancakes dominated the cheerful bustle around the great kitchen fireplace.

The examination of the books concluded, Mr. Lanigan remarked genially, as he pointed to an empty chair at the head of the table on whose snowy cloth the scanty array of household treasures was already glittering:

"I sent over for Father Pat as I was comin' in because 'tis gettin' late in the evenin', so ye can be married comfortably off-hand an' no bother about it; there's a fine room upstairs, an' a bed that's fit for a king, an' they're lightin' the fire there now so the smoke 'll be cleared out when ye're ready, for sweet bad luck to me if either o' ye go out of this house to-night!"

Of course Kitty, who had remained in the parlour, blushingly objected, a mere matter of detail which did not affect the arrangements in the least, while Phelim, who had made up his mind that the bargain was a good one, became properly impatient, so that when Father Pat made his appearance he found an air of undeniable festivity pervading the house, the genial spirit of the hour breathing upon all, from Murteen, the oldest farm labourer, who had got drunk with amazing celerity, to the young lovers themselves as they sat hand in hand under the fostering smiles of Mr. Lanigan while he pelted the amorous swain with appropriate badinage.

The good father, who had been that very evening anticipating a "cold Shrove," was no forbidding figure in this scene of Arcadian felicity, and after some passages of decorous hilarity, the mystic knot was tied, and Phelim McCaul, though he had entered the house only an hour before a bachelor, found himself pledged for life to Catherine Philomena Lanigan.

This important ceremony having been transacted, the home of the Lanigans became a perfect focus of gaiety, a few neighbours and a blind piper, whom very instinct had led to the spot, keeping the impromptu merry-making afoot.

Father Pat, a quaint figure not destitute of a certain pathos and dignity amid this somewhat boisterous jollity, presided in the parlour, and gave "tone" to the rejoicings; now praising Cissy's pancakes, now joking with the young, now gossiping with the old, and later on taking a hand at a quiet game of "forty-five" with Lanigan, the bridegroom, and one Corney O'Loon, a clerical student, a cousin of the family. Finally, it was he who proposed the health of the new wedded pair, in an extempore speech, winding up with a neat little quotation from Martial, which Mr. O'Loon promptly mistranslated, to his own great confusion, but the unmitigated satisfaction of his relations, who secretly believed him to be a far superior scholar to the parish priest, and soon after Father Pat took his departure, going back to his lonely house, the richer by a ten pound note, and a fresh experience in the ways of humanity.

When the priest had gone, dancing commenced in the great kitchen. Mrs. McCaul did not, however, take a

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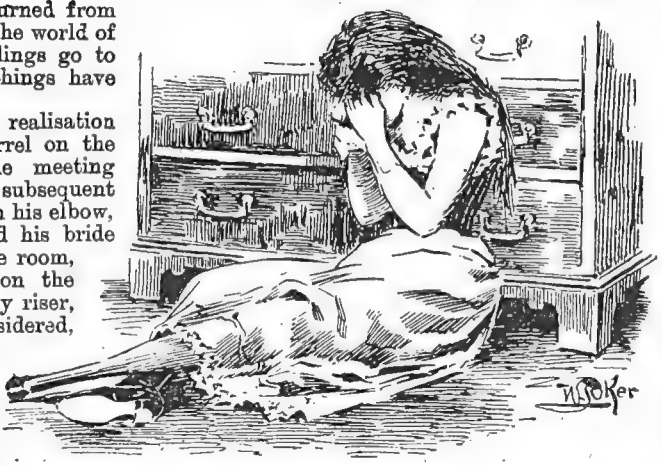
part in the proceedings, but quietly retired to her room, while Peggy footed it with the most hopeless detrimental in the parish, to the tune of the "Wind that Shook the Barley."

The next morning dawned grey and cold, but acting on a life-long habit, the bride was astir before her snoring spouse had returned from the world of dreams to the world of facts where twenty shillings go to the pound, and most things have their price.



Slowly he awoke to a realisation of his position, the quarrel on the preceeding evening, the meeting with Lanigan and the subsequent events, then leaning upon his elbow, he sleepily contemplated his bride as she pottered about the room, congratulating himself on the fact that she was an early riser, and that, everything considered, he had struck a remarkably good bargain.

After a while, however, his ingenuous brow clouded, a new expression stole into his honest eyes, and presently he gasped:

"Eroo Kitty agra, what's the matter with yer legs, sure 'tis limpin' ye are?"

Kitty suspended toilette operations a moment, taking a twist of hair out of her mouth so that she could reply.

"Yes, indeed, Phelim, dear," she answered placidly, "wan leg *is* a little biteen shorter than the other, but it's no impidiment, so you needn't be troubled about me at all."

And she limped across the room for a fresh hair-pin.

Phelim swore a bitter oath. Bouncing out of bed, he flung on some clothes, dashed to the door, flung it open, and rushed out upon the landing.

"Jack Lanigan," he shouted, "come here if yer a man!"

A head showed itself just then at the turn of the stairs below, and a moment later Lanigan himself was revealed in the act of ascending.

"Arrah, there ye are, me bhoy," he observed cheerfully, "'tis light an' airy ye are; the top of the mornin' to ye, I was comin' up to know were ye awake, how's herself?"

"See here," roared the deluded bridegroom, "why did ye give me that girl inside with wan leg longer than the other?"

"Sure, didn't you see her," retorted the father-in-law, "an' didn't you chose her from the three of 'em?"

"I know that quite well," rejoined Phelim, his eyes sparkling, "but I didn't know she limped, an' why didn't you tell me?"

"So I would, if you had only axed me," replied the other genially, "but I didn't know 'twas to run races you wanted her!"

That was all. The two men stared at one another the fraction of a second; then Phelim stepped back into the nuptial chamber and closed the door gently.

Then he found the limp consisted of a wooden leg.

LUSMORE.

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LITERARY NOTES | MUSIC OF THE MONTH, By R. S. HICHENS.
DANCE MUSIC—OLD AND NEW, By JOSEPH BENNETT.

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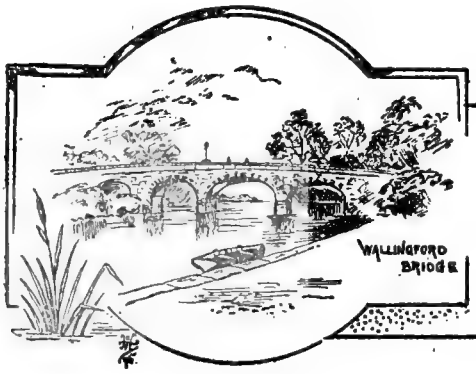

TRIAL BY FIRE.

The Major was one of the many well-born Englishmen who went to California with a younger son's portion and a small monthly allowance and hope to make a fortune on a vineyard or a wheat ranch. The plan always looks feasible in England, and the agent assures his victim that the £1 000 will buy a ten-acre plot, plant vines, build a decent bungalow, and tide the owner over until the vines shall bear and bring him in a harvest of good American gold.

The Major was going the way of many of his English friends. The £1,000 legacy was gone, and the monthly allowance of £20 (which, viewed from a distance, seemed large), always grew painfully small as it neared California and the debts it was supposed to cover. The Major's little mountain vineyard had been destroyed by phylloxera, and he was living on the uncertain promise of a number of green shoots, called respectfully "the olive orchard." But the Major was not unhappy. When he was not tilling the soil he sat on a little verandah with his briarwood pipe between his teeth, and studied the long, narrow, picturesque Napa Valley far below.

It may be that the Major's failure to succeed in the grape business was not the fault of the country, but that his genial, unpractical nature was the true obstacle to success. The Major was, in fact, the most helpless Englishman who ever went to California to take care of himself. The poor fellow became so convinced of this after a short trial that he engaged a man to act as valet for himself, and, incidentally, cook the meals of both. The Major was a solitary bachelor then. The gods alone knew in what unpropitious moment he picked up Pete, to hang about his neck a millstone of inefficiency. Pete's poverty must have been his recommendation, and the Major's poverty the excuse for keeping him. Pete had about as much knowledge of laying out and caring for a man's wardrobe as the Major had of running a ranch.

When the Major married Ellie Smith, a pretty San Francisco girl, Pete was promoted to be manager of the ranch, and expended his grooming talents on the pet mule. The Major's wife was "artistic." She had studied sketching, and did some really clever bits. Her admiring husband was sure that she possessed the divine afflatus, and consequently much time was devoted to art and little time to ranching.

But this was not without protest from one individual. Not that he was disturbed by lack of work, but poor Pete was oftener than not the unwilling model for Ellen's clever studies. One day Pete posed for "The Man with the Hoe." His temper was particularly tried on that occasion, for he had taken up his tool with the honest intention of weeding the primitive vegetable garden. Though he had scudded through the back yard and climbed the rear fence, he had not counted on meeting his young mistress in the barn yard. He began to wrestle with the weeds and pretended not to see her. His education, however, had not included a sight of Millet's picture, or he would have fled down the mountain side in utter despair.

"Stop, stop, Pete; right there. Don't move an inch," called the sweet voice that drove him to madness. "Kenneth," Ellie called to her husband, "look. Isn't it wonderful? The lights, the pose, the very landscape like——"

"The Man with the Hoe," shouted the Major gleefully. "I'll get your paints, Ellie. Hold on, Pete," and before the honest son of toil had time to collect his scattered senses he found himself posing in a very uncomfortable attitude, with the Napa Valley lying at his back and the Major's familiar phrases ringing in his ears: "Fine pose—jolly good subject—delicious colouring."

After Pete had posed for a hundred or more indifferent works of art without names, he began to think of deserting his master and leaving him to a just and awful fate. But this stupendous blow was averted by the arrival of Brompton Edwards, another Englishman, who had come to learn practical ranching under the direction of his father's old friend, the Major.

After a week had been given up to driving his *protégé* about the valley and introducing him to the English colony, the Major returned to his daily routine of pruning olive trees and digging out worm eaten grapevines. Ellie soon discovered in the young man's clean-cut features and fine athletic figure an entirely new field for art study, and Edwards found the time pass more pleasantly as a model than as an embryo rancher. They were together most of the daylight hours.

When Brompton was not posing for a wild Norseman or a Greek hero, he was sitting very close to Ellie, criticising, in soft caressing tones, the sketches of himself which she had been doing. Without actually straying from the path of duty, Ellie was treading on dangerously uncertain territory. She quite frankly admitted to herself that she was pretty and charming, and, being of that mind, she did not repress comparisons between her husband and the younger man.

Matters had arrived at a state where a warm-hearted,

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but vain, young woman needed a friend with the strength to hold up a good, powerful, unrelenting mirror for her to gaze into. Pete could have held up the mirror with right good will, but he did not know how. In these days he followed the Major with dog-like devotion, and only glowered when Ellie came out to the orchard one morning with her paints and succeeded in bringing upon herself a scolding from her over-indulgent husband.

She held her head very high and stiff, and marched over the hill some distance away, where she seated herself and pretended to sketch, but was in reality nursing her injured feelings to keep them alive. The Major watched her disappear with a pained expression on his good-natured face, and then went dejectedly into the house. Pete was deeply incensed against Ellie, and made another solemn vow to desert the ranch. It was the ninety-and-ninth time that he had done so, and this time he sealed the vow with an oath.

The long grass on the Napa hills was burnt and crisp, and Ellie was daubing yellow ochre and burnt umber on her canvas with vicious strokes. She was not giving any attention to her work, however, for an athletic form stood between her and the landscape, and she was indulging in a very foolish day-dream. To do the little woman justice, she was not in love with Brompton, but her vanity had been stimulated to such wonderful activity by his youthful gallantries that she fancied he was deeply infatuated with her. She wondered if he would ever tell her that he loved her. If she could only have some test of his love, what a satisfaction it would be!

* * * * *

Over on the mountain side, a half mile away, Pete leant on his horse and watched a thread of fire crawling like a red snake through the undergrush of chaparral and manzanita. He knew only too well that no human power could stop it, and that within a few minutes the gentle breeze would cause a flying spark to fall upon the long dry grass, and puff!—the crawling snake would become a great swirling, galloping mass of flame and smoke, and would pass over the very place where Ellie sat sulking and dreaming. Pete had firmly determined to leave the ranch. He had washed his hands of these people. He would not—but the grass was on fire, and Pete made a dash for the house, yelling at the top of his lungs for the Major.

The volume of smoke was rising high when Ellie rose to her feet and sniffed the air. Before she could gather up her paints, a thin rim of fire ran along the top of the little hill above her. The small birds and insects rose from the ground with a whirr and scattered down the hillside. Ellie glanced quickly backward, and saw the fire licking up the grass as it bore down upon her, and the smoke rolling heavenward in dense, sooty clouds. She did not lose her presence of mind, but remembered a small ploughed field a short distance away, where the flames could not reach her, and ran nimbly down the hill, with her fluttering skirts gathering cockle burs and sticker weed as she sped.

When she was fairly on the ploughed ground and gasping for breath, she saw the young Englishman tearing along the hill at a frantic rate. Through the smoke he looked pale and frightened. Ellie felt a thrill of satisfaction; here was the longed-for proof of his love, he thought she was in danger and had come to her rescue. A deep blush mounted to her cheeks, and her heart beat to suffocation. But he did not seem to see her. It was evident to her that he was crazed with fear and would plunge in to the fire in search of her. Merciful God! he would be burnt.

"Brompton!" she screamed; "dear Brompton, I am here, safe!"

The fire was very close, and she had to throw herself flat upon the ground to escape being burned. She gave one more despairing cry as she felt the hot breath scorch her clothing:

"Brompton! Brompton! Brompton!"

A great wave of smoke and flame swept round the edges of the ploughed ground, and for a minute nothing could be seen or heard. Fortunately for Ellie, the dry grass burnt like tinder, and the fire was soon roaring down the hill towards the valley.

When Ellie, choked and frightened, lifted her head, she saw the thin, long, scantily clad legs of her husband bounding over the blackened earth towards her. His duck trousers were smeared with soot, and he had a wet blanket about his shoulders. He could not speak, but caught Ellie in his arms, and burst into stifled sobs.

Behind them was heard the voice of Brompton Edwards.

"Hello there, Major," he called. "I had a very narrow squeak of it. My hammock and books are burned to tinder by this. By Jove, old fellow, you are burned yourself, aren't you? Your wife was safe enough. I knew she could take care of herself."

But Ellie buried her head in the wet blanket with a shudder and burst into tears of shame and contrition.

"Well, well," gasped Pete, who had stumbled up the hill with a bundle of wet sacks. "I never was so plaguey scared in my life. Thought you'd be burned sure, Miss Ellie. Me an' the Major will have a fine time next week clearing."

For Pete had reconsidered his ninety-and-ninth vow. Indeed, it was only a week later when he was speculating if there was ever a happier couple than the Major and his Ellie. And Pete beamed as he thought of the ignoble part Brompton Edwards played on the day of the fire.

BERRY SHARPE.

AHEM! Just a word. The new volume of PEARSON'S MAGAZINE is published, and it will be the more your loss than ours if you fail to get a copy.

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A Real Somersby.

LORD HARRY liked New York. It was his first visit to the great American metropolis, and after the fog of London, the crisp atmosphere and brilliant sunlight of the place affected him delightfully. And then the prevailing spirit of individual independence, which he caught at once, accorded precisely with his mood and charmed him.

Lord Harry had gone to America to be independent. He had tired of the clubs, the theatres, the balls and the boudoirs of London, and had cut loose from them for a good three months, at least. In company only with his valet, he had gone to New York for a new sensation.

He had been a slave to fashion over here. Everybody knew him and everybody courted him. Half the titled maidens in the kingdom wanted to marry him—perhaps he was young and prepossessing, but more likely because he was the possessor of an immense fortune and vast landed estates. To the best of his knowledge he hadn't the slightest sentiment for any one of them, and the prospect of a three months' absence from England was a positive relief.

The valet aforesaid was perfect in his way. He had been a Somersby servant for a number of years and was exceptionally well trained. He seemed very proud of his position and was admirably snobbish. There couldn't possibly have been a more immaculately snobbish servant in all the British realm. His particularly strong points, however, were his distinguished appearance and bearing. His master was quite his opposite in these respects. He of title was free and easy in his way, cordial, and entirely natural. At times it seemed almost as though his careless manner and *bonhomie* were assumed for a purpose, they were so incompatible with the dignity of his title. In view of the somewhat paradoxical dispositions of the two it is not remarkable that strangers sometimes found it difficult to tell which one was the real lord.

The new sensation which was sought by Lord Harry he was destined to experience without delay. On the second evening of his sojourn in New York he attended an uptown theatre, where the reigning queen of light opera was holding forth nightly to a mighty audience of enthusiastic admirers.

Forthwith Lord Harry fell in love.

That is, the sentiment that beset him was as near love as one of his variegated career was capable of experiencing at first sight. Literally, perhaps, it was not love, but it was a dangerous counterfeit, to say the least.

Of course Lord Somersby's movements in America had been religiously cabled to the London papers from the first. He was open in his attentions to the actress, and thereby furnished a continual fund of gossip. Naturally intelligence of his contemplated marriage reached his attorneys in Lincoln's Inn Fields.

Of course the object of his admiration was the opera queen. His mental conclusion that she was delicious and desirable was quickly formed, after his first scrutiny of her beautiful face.

Miss Marjory Yost was the idol of the hour in the United States metropolis. Born of honest and obscure parents in some remote village, she had found a patron in a casual summer visitor to the place, who had been struck with her beauty and the sweetness of her voice, and had given her the benefit of a thorough musical education. Her professional *début* was a success, and almost at once she had flashed out into a comic opera star of the first magnitude. Now all the town was at her feet.

She was really a remarkable young woman. To her beauty and her accomplishments she added a vivacity and a charm of manner that were at once fascinating and exhilarating. In her faultless face there was no indication of the worldly wisdom which characterised her conduct of her career. And she was not married. To the best knowledge of the public she was not so much as in love.

Lord Harry kept his seat until the curtain went down in the last act, the *finale* of which was a picturesque tableau, a crescent brooch of dazzling costumed Amazons set with the rarest jewel the Englishman had ever beheld—Marjory, transcendently fair, as she posed in a flood of calcium light.

"By Jove! I must be introduced," said Lord Harry to himself, as he went out of the theatre. "I wonder how they go about such things in America. I must learn all about this lovely creature, and make a play for her trusting heart."

He was at the theatre the following night, and again the night after that.

He sent the lady rare and costly flowers, and at last a note.

A few days later they were driving together in the Park.

Not so very long after that all the newspapers had the story of Lord Harry's infatuation for the actress. And racy reading it made, for wasn't Lord Harry Somersby one of the best known noblemen in England. Whew! what rich gossip it made for the clubs and boudoirs!

The general opinion was that Miss Yost had caught a veritable brainless prize, and that if she "played him right" she could be Lady Somersby any day she chose.

It was so like a fine British nobleman to throw himself away on a creature of the footlights! British noblemen are notorious for that.

"I suppose I am a scapegrace," said Lord Harry, thinking over the situation with the assistance of a black cigar and a long brandy-and-soda. "It's a shame that I shouldn't fall in love with and marry a maid of high degree. But the fact is, maids of high degree are tiresome. There's a sameness about 'em that's pawsitively exasperating. I'm base enough to like a clever girl, like Marjory, and I'm hanged if I care what people think. Yes, I'm a scapegrace, I suppose, but perhaps I'm not a *fool*."

Lord Harry later on proved that he was not altogether a fool.

In Marjory's dainty flat, the genial Englishman was quite at home. Marjory off the stage was even prettier and more fetching than Marjory on the stage, and in the warm seclusion of her little home she was like some rare exotic that lures the lips with splendid beauty and intoxicates the senses with sweetest fragrance.

And Marjory was clever; she had fairly eclipsed herself in the manipulation of the strings attached to

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milord. She had made him welcome in her home, but his privileges were severely proscribed. He was not her lord and master yet. She allowed him to come just near enough to singe his wings without the recompense of a practical victory. She had given him to understand the futility of his dominant aspiration by the telepathy of her eyes, and they had not come to words over the repulse.

"Marjory," he said one night, "you know how much I love you, don't you?"

"No, I can't say that I do," was the arch reply.

"I love you enough to make you my wife, if you'll have it that way," he went on, looking her in the eyes searchingly.

"Nothing would make me happier, milord," she replied demurely.

She was a consummate actress, and here was a situation that called her best powers into play.

"Never mind the 'milord,'" returned Lord Harry, a trifle testily, "I heard enough of that on the other side, and I thought you Americans were too democratic to indulge in it. You seem to like the title; is it the title you are going to marry, or me?"

"Perhaps neither one," she replied, smiling at him, "but if either, *you*. I'm an American through and through, and I care no more for a title than—*that!*" and she snapped her taper fingers. Then she put up her arms around his neck and continued: "It is you I love, and if you had not a cent in the world I should love you just the same. You believe me, do you not? You must believe me! I love you more than all the world beside. I should die without you!"

So it was settled that Marjory Yost, the queen of the comic opera, was to become Lady Somersby. The news was too important and too advantageous from the box-office point of view to remain secret long, and presently the newspapers were prattling over it like magpies.

To all of which the devil-may-care lord paid not the slightest attention, further than occasionally to read through a paragraph that amused him.

All of a sudden, in consequence, his lordship was brought up with a round turn. A letter came one morning with the London postmark that had a suspiciously business look. James brought it up with his lordship's breakfast.

"Read it, Jimmy," said his lordship irreverently.

"It's from your attorney's, sir," said James, scanning the missive. "It says they have heard with much interest and surprise of your lordship's matrimonial intentions, and they beg to remind your lordship of a clause in your father's will which declared that if your lordship marries beneath your rank you shall forfeit the £20,000 a year which constitutes your income from all the estates, sir. And they beg to remain your very humble servants."

"The dickens they do," said Lord Harry, for want of something better to say. Then after a silence, he broke out with:

"I'd forgotten all about that cranky business of the governor's—that is, if I ever knew it. I suppose I heard it read with a lot of other legal nonsense when I stepped into my distinguished progenitor's shoes five years ago, but since I have never had the remotest idea of ever getting married until now, it has never come up. Well, this settles it, by Jove! there's not a woman living worth £20,000 a year. The question is how on earth am I to get out of it with Marjory? Poor little girl, she loved me, and will take it pretty hard."

After another silence, about an hour in length, he called James and delivered his ultimatum like a statesman.

"James," he said, "I'll now see Marjory again. Now I've got a scheme I want you to work for me. You're a fine looking man, James, if I do say it myself, a real swell, by Jove! You've helped me out of many a scrape, and I want you to get me out of this little entanglement. Suppose you go up to Marjory's and tell her that I'm not the real Lord Somersby at all, but that *you* are the real *bona fide* blue blood, and so forth, and that out of consideration for her you have taken it upon yourself to tell her the truth. Do you see—as they say here in New York?"

"But, sir, why should I say I am the real lord? What reason could I give for the deception upon her and the public?"

"Say that you exchanged places with your valet for the sake of a novel experience. In escaping from London, where you were sick of being run after by Society, and coming to America, where you were utterly unknown, you conceived the idea of humbugging everybody into leaving you to enjoy yourself in peace and allowing your valet to pose as Lord Somersby. Ha, ha! Good story, eh? I tell you it will go! Why, I'll have it put in the newspapers. That sort of thing has been done in America, I know. You see, James, I've got to quit Marjory short off, and this does it without any sort of scene, or trouble, or talk. Twenty thousand pounds a year is at stake! Here's a hundred for you, James. Now the case is yours. I'll see that you are backed up by the newspapers. Do your prettiest, old chap!"

It was hard, of course, to give Marjory up, but evidently it was the only thing to be done. He didn't have the heart to go to her himself and break with her.

Loving him as she did, she would make it hard for him to say good-bye to her for ever. It was better to kill her love for him at a blow by making her believe that she was the victim of a cruel deception. And he would go back to England forthwith, and never see her again.

As for his love for her, and his disappointment, he would try to survive them. But he should always remember her as the one woman of all others he had met that was utterly pure and sincere.

Just how the absurd story that the Englishman who had been known as Lord Somersby's valet, was communicated to the Press, it would be hard to say. But the papers made a sensation of it.

With the first paper that contained it in his pocket, James presented himself at Marjory's well-known apartment.

He was immaculately dressed, and very imposing in appearance. Why, anybody with half an eye should have known instinctively that he was the real Somersby, all the time.

As I remarked before, this valet was perfect in his way.

That he entered fully into the spirit of the duty before him was manifested by his eager manner.

The queen of comic opera was at home.

"Poor little Marjory!" his lordship was saying, as he paced his room.

* * * * *

A few hours later Lord Harry was given a telegram, which read:

MY LORD,—The story was a perfect success. I have yielded to temptation and eloped with the lady.—JAMES.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" was all that Lord Harry could say.

T. R.

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The Mountebank's Love.

She was a remarkable young woman. One rumour was that she was the daughter of a famous statesman, and had gone on the stage to retrieve the fallen fortunes of the family. Another dubbed her a daughter of the slums, who had made her first appearance in an East-end gaff. Still another declared she had been married three times and divorced twice. No one knew the truth. Everybody told a different tale.

And when the summer was done and the autumn season had opened, when critics had praised her marvellous voice and the town had gone wild over her beauty, her acting, and her flawless face, Beatrix, at the summit of her career, with everyone at her feet, every wish and ambition gratified, laughed in the faces of the men making desperate vows to her, drove her manager to drink by her whims and caprices, and yawned with *ennui*.

"Any life would be better than this," she mused as she stood one day looking out of the window at the slowly falling snow, dropping quietly and sadly down like the tears of a sorrowing woman.

The room in which she stood was a luxurious nest, with its cushions, divans, silken hangings, perfumes and flowers Over a chair hung a mantle of fur fit for a duchess. On the dressing-table glistened the sheen of silver and the polish of ivory. An open fire gave the finishing touch of comfort, and before it was drawn a velvet couch heaped high with cushions from which she had just risen.

But instead of revelling in this delightful sybaritish room, Miss Osmond continued to stare out of the window at the snow drifting down, down into the filth and mud of the streets, where it was speedily trodden out of sight under the heels of the passers-by.

What did Beatrix see through the misty veil of those slow-dropping snowflakes?

Many things.

An old-fashioned garden choked with weeds and brambles; an old red farm house, the doors and windows of which were nailed up, two graves on the hillside on which the snow was falling—falling.

Miss Osmond gave a little start and turned from the window. The rosy firelight danced and beckoned to her, the spacious couch held seductive arms to her; the lilies on the mantel, the orchids on the table laughed and smiled at her. She paid no heed, but went over to her desk and opening a drawer, took out a time-stained envelope and carefully opened it. From it dropped two locks of hair—both grey—one short and bristling, the other, a long curling tress. She stared blindly at them for a moment, and over her pretty, painted cheeks tears slowly dropped, even as the snow was dropping down over those two lonely graves far away on a bleak Yorkshire moor.

* * * * *

Tom Bohannon, mountebank, was Beatrix's most devoted admirer. He chanced to be, for the moment, the favourite jester of the fickle populace. He was so hopelessly ugly, he was fascinating. Popular, too, especially with the gilded youth, who like to be seen in the company of well-known actors. Tom was a man of the world, unquestionably, but in spite of his stormy, reckless existence, down deep in his heart he had kept an ideal or two. From the moment he set eyes on this ravishing woman he loved her, knowing full well that his passion was absolutely hopeless.

Cupid and Tom Bohannon! Preposterous pair.

Strangely enough, however, this disdainful beauty, who spurned men's hearts like footballs, was always gentle to old Tom. His touching devotion—the devotion of a dog—moved her far more than the savage pursuits and the deliberate, skilfully directed sieges of which she was the object. Nothing delighted her more than to thwart the consummate devilry which everywhere encompassed her. The *roués* of the town were on their metal. All sorts of traps were set for her; all sorts of gilded propositions made her. Beatrix continued to lead her pursuers to the very threshold of love; then coolly locking the door in their faces, mocked at them from the window. But to poor old Bohannon she was always as gentle as a sister.

Tom wanted Trix to leave the stage. "You've got a great start," he was wont to say. "Your voice is superb, and your beauty has carried London by storm, but you are not one of us. You are as proud as a princess. You walk over the necks of the crowd. You must marry. I'd marry you myself, Trix, poor buffoon—mountebank that I am," with mock heroics, "were it not for the fact that I'm wedded to my art."

All this, with a glass of champagne in his hand, a smile on his lips, and an ache in his battered old heart.

One snowy March morning, as Trix sat at the piano running over some new music which had just been sent her, Bohannon was shown in, looking in his flake-strewn fur coat like a big Polar bear.

"Hallo, little girl," he cheerfully called. "Well, you are simply out of sight this morning. Gad! that's a pretty gown. Where did you get the flowers?" plunging his nose into the mass of white heather on the piano.

"I bought it myself," said Trix.

"Never!" cried Tom, "it isn't possible that you have come to that."

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"Yes," said the girl, "I bought it because they reminded me of—of my old home. There was a great clump of it under mother's window."

It was the first time Bohannon had heard Trix refer to her past life, and something in her face forbade any questions or jests. But, thinking to direct her thoughts from the sombre channel towards which they appeared to be drifting, he rattled on at a lively pace, retailing the gossip of the Rialto.

"I had a deuce of a shock this morning," he said, "thought I'd struck a ghost, but it was substantial flesh and blood after all. I don't believe you ever knew him. No, he was before your time. But Lord! Lord! how he used to set the town ablaze when he played 'Armand' to Nelly Dorchester's 'Camille.' He's just back from Australia—handsomer than ever—I declare he looks like a prince of the blood royal."

"Who is this phenomenon?" demanded Miss Osmond, turning languidly round on the piano-stool, and idly drumming with one hand on the keys.

"Charlie Singleton," replied Bohannon, helping himself to a sprig of heather for his coat. "Here, Trix, pin this on for me. Did you know him?"

"Charlie Singleton," said Beatrix in a queer voice. "Tom, you must have been mistaken."

"No, child. We walked down the Strand together and had a drink—why, Trix, how your hands tremble. Good Heavens! what is it?"

He caught her in his arms, for he thought she was falling. But in a moment she recovered her self-possession, and went on fastening the sprig of heather in his coat.

"And what do you think he told me? You see Charlie never got on with his wife. That was one reason he went out to Australia. Two months ago his wife died, and he hurried home to look after the child—a sweet, bright little girl."

Miss Osmond's nerves were hammering now, and the blood was rushing to the white face. Tom gabbled on: "It seems he isn't discouraged, though, for he's going to marry again, and never could you guess the girl. It's this soubrette that's coming over to join your company—what's her name? Gwendoline Clarendon—he met her in Sydney——"

"Tom, Tom," a sharp cry of agony broke from the lips of a woman who had flouted so many lovers, "stop, stop, I can't bear it."

"Trix, what is this?"

"I loved him long ago," she said mournfully. "I broke my mother's heart—my father died insane from grief—I was only a girl—an innocent, trusting girl—Tom, he is the man who made me the woman I am, selfish, heartless, soulless."

"You loved him," he said dully, "and he spoke of you this morning. Said he had a great curiosity to see you—had heard so much of your beauty. He's going to appear at the 'Thespian Hand' benefit next week—I suppose he'll speak to you—you'll talk over old times,"—he started up fiercely at her cry of pain.

"No, no," she moaned. "Oh, Tom, dear Tom, you are the only friend I have on earth. I beg you never let him approach me—never let him touch me."

There was a gasp, a sigh, silence.

Like a lily broken from its stalk, the girl huddled in an unconscious little heap at Bohannon's feet.

* * * * *

It was a great bill that was offered that season at the annual benefit performance of the "Thespian Hand Society."

The house was packed, and Miss Osmond, as Thisbe, received an ovation. She went through her *rôle* as though inspired. Long after the sweet tones of her lovely voice echoed in many a heart. Never had she looked so beautiful. Her cold, statuesque, marble-like loveliness was specially marked.

"She looked like an angel," a ballet girl said afterwards.

Immediately upon the conclusion of the scene from *Pryamus and Thisbe*, the stage was set for the historic drama in which Singleton was to make his reappearance. The house fairly rose at him, the old idol, who had been away so long. Flowers were tossed him, and jewelled hands saluted him.

Beatrix stood on the wings watching him handsome, graceful, full of divine fire, a little older and greyer than in the old days, but, oh, how dear!

She idly marked his superb costume. It was very pretty. That lace on the sleeve was worth a small fortune. How still the hour. What was that noise? She looked up.

Singleton stood directly under the huge piece of "batting" which came crashing down from the flies. He would surely have been killed had not that slight figure rushed from the wings, pushed him on one side, and then gone, face downwards, under the heavy wooden footpiece of a drop.

A groan ran through the house as the audience half rose. There was a momentary glimpse of a motley crowd rushing from all the wings on the stage; ballet girls in flimsy skirts; minstrels pale through their burnt cork; the great actress herself wringing her hands and pouring forth French hysterics and profanity.

Then the curtain fell. The orchestra struck up a popular topical song, but ceased after a bar or two when Dick Adams, the stage manager, came before the curtain and said in a dazed sort of way that, owing to the deplorable accident which had just occurred, the performance would be concluded at once.

Behind the scenes all was confusion and chaos. The physician summoned from the audience held a limp, little white hand in his a moment, slowly shook his head and said gravely to the terror-stricken group about:

"It's all over."

There in a tangled mass of soft white draperies, whose snowy surface was stained with blood, lay Beatrix dead. Across her sweet breast was a spray of crushed white heather, whose fragrance stole softly upward. At her side, his hands clenched, his face ghastly with horror, stood the man for whom she had given her young life. He knew that young face reproaching him with piteous, sightless eyes—with a groan he stooped to lift her to his heart.

But a man with a face as livid as his own and blazing eyes, thrust him back.

"Do not dare to touch her," he said, "she asked me once never to let you touch her and—I shall keep my promise to the dead."

There is another grave in the little lonely Yorkshire burying ground behind the desolate farmhouse and the old-fashioned garden full of weeds. At its head every spring blooms the white heather, and over it falls the snow as quietly as the tears fall down a woman's cheeks.

And the only visitor this lonely grave has is an ugly-faced buffoon—a fellow of infinite jest, whose quips and gambols are wont to set the table in a roar.

Gaskell Lynn.

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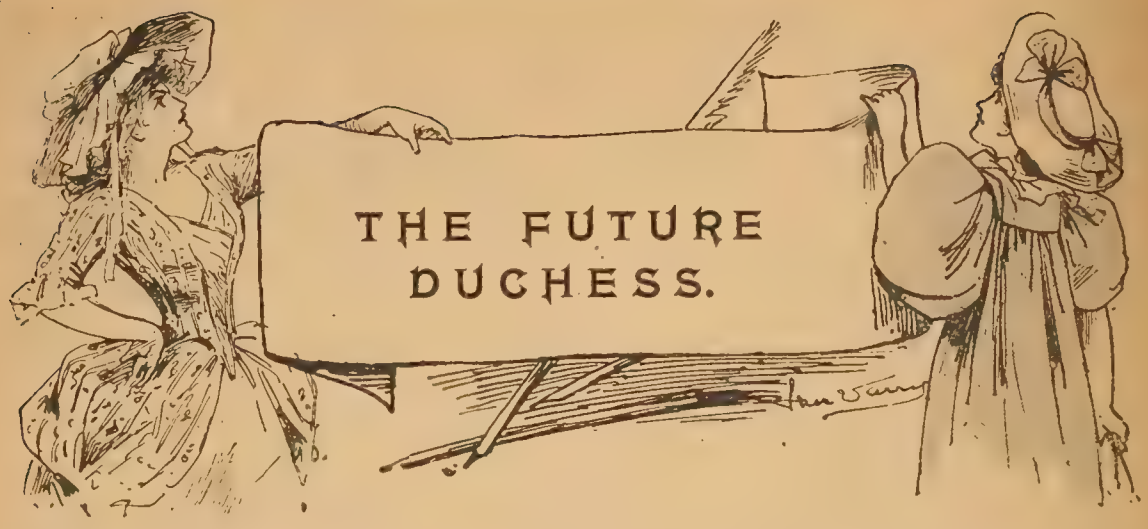

THE FUTURE DUCHESS.

"Mrs. Chester!"

As the door of Phyllis's boudoir opened, and this name was announced, she sprang from her low chair, and turned paler in the gathering gloom.

"How do you do?" advancing somewhat nervously. "Turn up the lights," addressing the servant.

The visitor winced at the sudden electric glare, and shaded her eyes. She was an elderly lady, dressed in deep mourning. Phyllis wore a widow's gown, exquisitely fitting, and highly becoming to her beautiful features.

"I have heard the news," said Mrs. Chester, a hard ring in her voice.

Phyllis drew a chair forward for her mother-in-law.

"I had hoped it would not leak out," she replied.

"I should have thought you were sensible enough to know that was an impossibility. When a widow, whose husband is barely cold in the ground, becomes engaged to a Duke old enough to be her grandfather, and foolish enough to betray her secret, when out of sheer decency——"

"Spare me your opinion—and that of the world," said the future Duchess, drawing herself up proudly, though a mist of tears dimmed her eyes. "I know what it must be already."

"And when will the wedding take place?" asked her mother-in-law bitterly.

Phyllis started.

"Not yet," she said, passing her hand over her brow.

"I suppose you intend waiting the conventional year, though it hardly seems necessary. At the present moment you are living on the Duke's bounty, since my poor boy left you penniless. In the face of this, the sooner you marry the better—Society will forgive much to a duchess."

"Do not speak so harshly," replied Phyllis, looking steadfastly at Mrs. Chester. "I have suffered greatly, and the duke is good and kind—an honourable man. You think I have forgotten George—that I am insulting his memory, but you don't know—you don't understand!"

"Oh, yes," retorted Mrs. Chester, "the old story—the lust of gold—take fortune at the flood—I can imagine the thousand excuses behind which you shield yourself." As she spoke her voice shook suddenly, and the tears coursed freely down her cheeks.

A struggle passed in Phyllis's mind, as she gazed with infinite compassion on the stricken mother.

But she forced back her own emotion, combated the temptation to speak the truth, and took Mrs. Chester's hand in silence as she rose to go.

"Good-bye, Phyllis—in the future we may not meet, but I shall try to think of you only as George's wife."

"Thank you," she answered softly, re-echoing with a sigh: "as George's wife!"

When Phyllis was again alone, she paced the room restlessly.

"I dared not speak," she murmured, "it would be too dangerous!"

Another ring at the bell—footsteps in the hall.

Phyllis advanced smilingly to greet Lady Almina.

"My brother begged me to fetch you," she said. "The carriage is waiting: will you come?"

Phyllis hesitated.

It was just one of those glorious summer evenings that George had loved.

"The garden is very tempting," continued Lady Almina; "I envy Adrian his London trees. I am nearly roasted in Grosvenor Gate."

"I'll come," declared young Mrs. Chester.

A few moments later they were driving to the Duke's house.

"You did not tell me Adrian had friends with him," said Phyllis, as a group of men on the lawn caught her eye.

"Only a few 'casuals' who have dropped in since I left."

"How pale Adrian looks!" murmured his *fiancée*.

"Yes, he suffers terribly; his health is a perfect scourge."

"Ah! Phyllis," he exclaimed, hobbling forward with the aid of a stick, "as fresh and charming as ever!"

His companions scanned the future Duchess critically. She was divinely fair—too fair to sell herself for wealth and position. One man advanced, and held out his hand to Mrs. Chester. At sight of him her lips blanched, a sudden indefinable terror crept into her eyes

"You have not forgotten me," he said slowly.

'No," she replied, with a forced smile.

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"I only returned from America yesterday," he vouchsafed.

"You have met Mr. Vincent before?" cried the Duke.

"Oh! yes," answered Phyllis, then in a lowered tone, "he was a friend of my husband."

"James is bringing my bath chair," said the old man, "and I am going round the grounds. Don't trouble to come, Phyllis, you look tired. These gentlemen wish to make a tour of inspection."

"I will stay with Mrs. Chester," said Mr. Vincent. "It will be pleasant to talk over old times."

Phyllis shuddered. As they moved away, she faced John Vincent defiantly.

He was the first to speak.

"What does this all mean?"

Scorn and contempt rang out in his tone.

Phyllis bit her lip.

"I can explain, but for mercy's sake don't betray me! you know how I have suffered—the secret of my life is in your hands—I despise and hate myself—what I am doing is loathsome and repugnant to my whole nature—but the sacrifice is for George!"

"For *him!* Good gracious, Mrs. Chester, I did not expect to hear you joke at such a moment."

"You don't believe me?"

"How can I, when I find you here, the affianced wife of my host, knowing as I do that your husband still lives."

"Be careful what you say!" glancing round anxiously, "and I will explain everything."

He smiled sarcastically.

"Go on, I am most interested."

His tone of superiority aroused Mrs. Chester's ire.

"It was through *you*," she began, in a low vibrating voice, "that my husband first got into trouble. He was easily led, and your bad influence took hold of him; you dragged him down to your own wretched level! George and John Vincent were in the mire together, only he sank and you swam. Where would you have been now if your uncle, Lord Ivison, had not died opportunely and left you a fortune? He, poor fellow, had no such good luck to help him out of overwhelming difficulties, and so he is still in hiding, while the world believes him dead. I dare not go to him, but soon he will return to me."

"How so?"

"Listen. The Duke, as you know, is fabulously rich; he gives me everything I desire—money, jewels. Bah! it sickens me to talk of it."

"Yes, yes."

"Don't you follow me? Can't you see that in this way I am saving my husband? Adrian's money will restore him to life and freedom!"

"But the price?" whispered John Vincent.

She turned to him with flashing eyes, no trace of shame was there, only the martyred love that memory kept green.

"I am paying it now, in this miserable living lie."

"How long is it to last?"

"Only a short while. George," with a vivid blush, "knows what I am doing, and before the wedding day he will return unexpectedly from the dead. We have invented a story that may be believed, but it matters little then one way or the other."

There was a strange expression in her listener's eyes; he spoke banteringly.

"Oh! George's reported death can be easily explained; they had a detailed account of mine in the paper last week after a carriage accident. Say he has been dangerously ill for months in the wilds of America; work it out like a plot in a novel."

He laughed harshly, and the sound was strangely horrible to Phyllis Chester.

"So you comprehend at last?" she said.

"Yes, only too well! But you hardly seem to realise how you are degrading your womanhood."

"People take different views of right and wrong. If it *is* sin, think what I am doing? By this means I can release my husband from that which is worse than death."

"By practically robbing the Duke. Ah! you ignore, Mrs. Chester, the injury wrought on your miserable decoy. I am his friend, and therefore in duty bound to defend him."

She started visibly.

"You will never betray me, after I have worked and striven; you could not be so cruel."

He rose, and towered above her, with set lips and glittering eyes. "Have you forgotten the past—Phyllis—the old score?"

"No, you loved me once, in the name of that love I implore you——"

"Enough!" He held up his hand warningly. "For seven long years have I smarted under the sting of that old wound. You betrayed my confidence then, forsook me for my friend, worked as you are working now, to harm me for his sake. You never grumbled at my gambling, so long as I won money enough to pay your lover's debts. When that failed, you cast me aside like a broken toy. It was then I grew to hate where I had loved. These things are not allowed to happen twice in a lifetime. I do not intend to stand quietly by and see another man outraged as I was."

Her face was set and motionless, she tried to speak, but her voice died in a strangled sob, approaching voices warned her to keep calm.

Her enemy gazed remorselessly into her frightened eyes. The game was up, she shivered, as if with sudden deadly cold.

* * * * *

The Duke fell dangerously ill. John Vincent did not know that he had suffered before from a paralytic stroke, when he dealt him the blow that brought on another. For weeks he lay helpless, unable to raise a hand, or speak, while Phyllis watched by his bed-side night and day in an agony of remorse and self-accusation.

Sometimes he gazed at her with such a depth of misery in his eyes, that she would break down and sob at his side, till his pitiful expression forced her to control her emotion.

One day he rallied, his senses returned to him, clear as before the fatal malady.

"Phyllis," he said, a wan smile flickering over his tired face, "come nearer, give me your hand—I want to speak to you."

"Adrian, I am listening."

"I made a will in your favour," he murmured, "I shall not change it. I am dying, Phyllis, with the stain of this money on my soul—the wealth that might have done so much good. I want you and your—your husband, to start life afresh, and try to compensate for my failure. Let me kiss you—once."

The woman bent down and laid her burning cheek upon his frozen lips.

WINIFRED GRAHAM.

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LEGENDS OF WOLFVILLE.

BY "DAN QUINN."

Wolfville is a Cattleman's Settlement in Arizona, and the Characters in these Legends are Cowboys.

No. 12.—Taught by Texas.

"MIGHTY likely it's a week after Rainbow Sam dies off," said the old cattleman, in a tone of confidence, "when the camp turns in an' has a little jest with the Signal Service sharp. You see, we're that depressed about Rainbow cashin' in we needs relaxation that way, so we all nacheral enough diverts ourse'fs with this signal party who comes trailin' up all handy.

"Wherefore I ag'in remarks that Wolfville is a proper peaceful place, an' its little joke with the Signal Service party needn't be inferred against none as its daily programme.

"This yere gent has been goin' about casool ever since the stage comes in, an' his air is soopercilious like he looks down on the entire camp; an' it's all a heap irritatin'. He's been pesterin' an projectin' about the post-office for mighty like an hour when all at once he crosses over to the 'Red Light' an' fronts up to the bar. He don't invite none of us to likker; jest himself, which bad manners is shore received invidious.

"'Gimme a cocktail,' says this Signal sharp to the barkeep.

"As they ain't mixin' no drinks at the 'Red Light,' for man or beast, nor yet at 'Hamilton's Hurdy Gurdy,' you can begin to suspect that this sport in the blue uniform don't get no cocktail.

"'Can't mix no drinks,' says the barkeep.

"'Can't mix no cocktails?' repeats the Signal Sharp. 'Why, what a band of prairie dogs this yere hamlet is! What's the matter with you all, you can't mix no cocktails? Don't you know enough?'

"'Do we all know enough?' says the barkeep some facetious that way. 'Stranger, we simply bulges an' suffers with what we knows. But that's a law agin cocktails and all mixin' drinks. You see, a Mexican female over in Tucson is mixin' drinks for a gent she's a-harborin' idees agin, an' she rings in the loco on to him, an' he goes plumb crazy. Then the Legislature ups an' makes a law abatin' of mixed drinks. This yere bein' Gospel trooth, you'll have to drink straight whisky, and drink it outen a tin cup, too.'

"As he says this for a balzer, the barkeep, which it was Sandy McAuliffe, sets up a bottle and a tin cup, an' slams a six-shooter on the bar at the same time. Whereupon the Signal Sharp takes a gulp or two of straight nose paint an' don't say nothin' more of cocktails. But he looks skeered an' ugly.

"'Whatever is the damage, anyhow?' he says to Sandy, as soon as he quits gaggin' over the whisky, which tastes some raw an' vicious to him, an' him with his ladylike throat all ready for cocktails instead; 'what's thar to pay?'

"'Nary cent,' says Sandy, moppin' up the bar plenty complacent, 'not a sou, markee. That drink's on the house, stranger.'

"When the Signal sharp goes out, Enright says he's got mighty pore manners, an' he marvels he's still walkin' the earth.

"'However,' says Enright, 'I s'pose his livin' so long arises mainly from stayin' in the East, where they don't make no p'int on ettyquette an' bein' polite, an' runs things looser.'

"'Whatever's the matter of chasin' this insultin' tenderfoot around a lot?' asks Texas Thompson, an' havin' fun with him. 'Thar ain't nothin' doin', an' we oughter not begretch half-day's work educatin' this party. If something ain't done forthwith to inform his mind on the subjects of his social dooties while he stays in Arizona, you can gamble he won't last to go East no more.'

"As what Texas Thompson says is correct, it ain't no time before there is a general desire to enlighten this yere Signal party. As Thompson suggests the idee nacherally he goes for'ard to begin its execution.

"'But be keerful, Texas,' says Enright, 'an' don't force no showdown with this Signal gent. Attainin' an education is one thing, an' bein' killed that way is plumb different; an' while I sees no objections to swellin' the general fund of this young man's knowledge, I don't propose that you all's goin' to confer no dieploma an' graduate him into heaven on high with a gun at one an' the same time.'

"'None whatever,' says Texas Thompson. 'We merely toys with this tenderfoot, an' never so much as breaks his crust or drors blood the slightest morsel. He's taking life too trivial; an' all what we all p'ints out to do is to sober him up an' teach him decorousness some.'

"So Texas Thompson goes sa'nterin' up the street so as to cross the trail of this Signal party, who's headed down. Jest as they passes Texas turns as ferocious as forty timber wolves, an' clasps his hand on the shoulder of the Signal party.

"'How's this yere, I demands to know?' says Texas, shakin' back his long hair. An' he shorely looks bad and hardened.

"'How's that?' says the Signal man, some astonished.

"'You saveys mighty well,' says Texas. 'You fails to bow to me, aimin' to insult an' put it all over me in the presence of this yere multitood. Think of it, gents,' goes on Texas, beginnin' to froth an' a raisin' his voice to a whoop, 'think of it, an' me the war chief of the

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Texas Panhandle with forty-two skelps to my credit, to be sot on an' insulted by a puny shorthorn like this. It shore makes me wonder be I alive.'

"'Stranger,' says Texas, turnin' to the Signal party an' his hand on his gun, 'nothin' but blood is goin' to do me now. If I was troo to myse'f at this minute I'd shorely split you like a mackerel, an' leave you on both sides of the road. But I restrains myse'f this far; I don't notice no gun on you. Go, tharfore, an' heel yourse'f; for by next drink time the avenger 'll be ha'ntin' your trail. I gives you half-an-hour to live. Not on your account, 'cause it ain't comin' to you; but merely not to ketch no angels off their guard, an' to allow 'em a chance to organise for your protection. Pendin' hostilities I shall rest myself in the "Red Light," permittin' you the advantages of the dance hall, where Hamilton 'll give you pen, ink, and monte table, whereby to concoct your last will. Adios.'

"By the time Texas gets off this long, big talk, an' starts over to the 'Red Light,' the Signal man is lookin' a heap perturbed. He's shorely alarmed.

"'See yere, Amigo,' says Dan Boggs, breakin' loose all at once, as Texas p'ints out for the 'Red Light,' 'you're a plumb stranger to me, but I takes a chance and stands your friend. Now, here's what you do. You frame yourse'f up with a Colt's 44, an' lay for this Texas Thompson. He's a rustler, an' a hoss thief, an' a murderer, who, as he says, has downed forty-two men, not countin' Mexicans an' Mavericks. He oughter be massacred; an' now as it's come your way prance in an' spill his blood. This camp'll justify an' applaud the play.'

"'But I can't fight none,' says the Signal man. 'It's agin' the rools an' regulations of the army.'

"'Which I shore can't see none now you're goin' to renig,' says Dave Tutt. 'This felon Texas is due to shoot you on sight. Them army rools shorely ought as permit a gent to scout off to one side the strict trail a little when it's come down to savin' his own skelp.'

"One way an' another Tutt an' Boggs makes clear to black paint to the Signal sharp that thar's only two cards in the box; either he downs Texas Thompson or Texas gets him. The Signal party says it is what he calls a dread alternative.

"The Signal party says he's thankful he's found friends in Boggs an' Tutt, an' tharupon they all lines out for the dance hall, where they gets drinks, an' the Single man, who's some pallid, puts it up he'll write some letters an' some other papers, an' sorter straighten up his game. Boggs observes this is a good move, an' that Tutt an' he'll take an occasional drink an' ride her herd on his interests while he does.

"Tutt and Boggs has got their brands on mebby two drinks, when over comes Doc. Peets plenty severe an' says:

"'Who all represents for this gent who's out for the blood of my friend Texas Thompson?'

"'Talk to me an' Tutt,' says Boggs, 'an' cut her short; 'cause it's the opinion of our gent this criminal Thompson infests the earth to a p'int where it's a case of over-play an' he's longin' to begin his butchery.'

"'In five minutes, then,' says Peets, 'you all organise your gent an' come a-runnin', I must canter over to see how Thompson's linin' up. He's that fretful a minute back when I leaves him he's bitin' hunks outen a white-ash card table like it's ginger cake, an' moanin' for blood. Old Monte's ridin' herd on him; but I better get back, as he might in his frenzy that away fetch loose any moment, an' come a-curvin' over yere an' go to killin' your gent without orders; which the same would be onelegant an' no delicacy to it.'

"As soon as Peets is started for the 'Red Light' agin, Tutt turns to the Signal party, who's settin' there lookin' he'pless an' worried like he's a prairie dog who's come back from visitin' some other dog, an' finds a rattlesnake's done pitched camp in the mouth of his hole while he's out.

"'Now then, stranger,' says Tutt, 'if you all has accomplished that clerical work me an' Dan 'll lead you to your victim. When you gets to shootin' aim low an' be shore an' see your hind sight every time you cuts loose.'

"The Signal party looks some grey an' haggard, but not seein' no other way gets up an' after stampedin' about a trifle nervous, allows, since it's the best he can do, he's ready.

"Old Monte has spread a blanket over in front of the 'Red Light,' an' as Tutt an' Boggs starts out with their Signal party thar's a yell like forty Apaches heard across the street.

"'That's Thompson's war yelp,' says Boggs, expoundin' of the noise to the Signal party. 'Which it would seem from the fervor he puts into it he's shorely all keyed up.'

"As Doc. Peets comes out a-leadin' of Thompson it's noticed Thompson's got a tin cup.

"'Whatever's your gent a-packin' of that utensil for?' demands Tutt, mighty truculent. 'Is this yere to be a combat with dippers?'

"'Oh, no,' says Peet, like he's tryin' to excuse something, 'but he insists on fetchin' it so hard that at last to soothe him I gives my consent.'

"'Well, we challenges the dipper?' says Tutt. 'You all will fight on the square or we remove our man.'

"'Don't, don't,' shouts Thompson, like he's agitated no limit; 'don't take him outen my sight no more. I only fetches the cup to drink his blood with; but it's nothin' but a small detail which I relinquishes readily before ever I allows my victim the least loophole of escape.'

"When Peets goes up an' takes Thompson's cup the two debates together in whisper. 'Thompson's gettin' mighty hot an' furious,' at last Peets says to him, 'which I tells you such a proposal is irregular an plumb to one side of the trail. But since you insists, of course, I names it. My gent yere,' goes on Peets to Boggs an' Tutt, 'wants to agree that the survivor's to be allowed to skelp the deceased. Does the bluff go?'

"'It's what our gent's been urgin' from the jump,' says Boggs, 'an' therefore we consents with glee. Round up you man now an' let's get to shootin'.'

"I don't reckon I ever sees anybody who seems as fatigued as the Signal sharp when Boggs an' Tutt starts to lead him up to the blanket. Thar's a expression in his face like he don't think it's a game worth comin' to Arizona to set in to. While they're standin' up their folks Texas Thompson breaks loose ag'in, because it's a fight over a blanket an' not a handkerchief, as he calls for.

"'What's the meanin' of a cold an' formal racket sech as this?' he howls, turnin' on Peets. 'I want to go close to my meat, I tells you, where it is warm.'

"But they don't proceed none. As Tutt turns to his Signal sharp, who's all but locoed by the shoutin' an' has to be detained by Boggs from runnin' away, Jack Moore comes chargin' up on his pony, an' throws a gun on the whole outfit.

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"'Hands up, yere!' he says, sharp an' brief, 'or I fixes the coyotes for meat for a month to come.'

"Everybody's hands goes up, an' it's plain Moore's comin' ain't no disapp'intment to the Signal person. He's that relieved, he shows it.

"'Don't look so tickled,' growls Boggs to him, as Moore heads the round-up for the store. 'Don't look so light an' gay about it; you mortifies me to death.'

"Moore takes the gang over to the store, where Enright's settin' as a jedge. He allows he's goin' to put 'em all on trial for disturbin' of Wolfville's peace. The Signal sharp starts to say something when Peets interrupts, an' that brings Boggs to the front, an' after that a general uproar breaks loose like a stampede.

"'Gimme a knife, somebody,' howls Texas Thompson, 'an' let me get in on this play. Am I to be robbed of my prey like this?'

"But Enright jumps for an old Spencer seven-shooter, an' gives it out cold that he's goin' to down the first gent that opens his mouth or talks back to him a second time. This ca'ms 'em, an' the riot sorter simmers.

"'Not that I objects to a street fight,' says Enright, discussin' of the case, 'but you all talks too much. From the jabber that was going on over that blanket out thar, it shorely reminds me a mighty sight more of a passel of old women at a quiltin' bee, than an outfit of serious gents who's pullin' off a docel. To cut her short, the public don't foster no sech rackets as this, an' I yereupon puts Texas Thompson an' his Signal party under 50,000 dol. bonds to keep the peace.'

"Texas Thompson is set loose with Peets an' Cherokee Hall on his papers, but the Signal sharp, bein' a stranger in town can't put up no bonds.

"'Which, as thar's no calaboose in camp to put you into,' says Enright, when he's told by the Signal party he can't make no bonds, 'an' as it's plumb against the Arizona constitootion to let you go, I shore sees no trail out but to hang you; I regrets the necessity which leads a poor tenderfoot like you all to the halter, but you see yourse'f the Union must and shall be preserved. Mr. Moore, go over to my pony an' fetch the rope. It's a new half inch manilla, but I cheerfully donates it to jestice jest the same.'

"When Moore gets back with the rope an' everybody's lookin' plumb serious that away, it shakes the Signal party to a degree he has to camp down on a shoebox an' allows he needs a drink. Boggs says he'll go after it, when Tutt breaks in an' says he's got a bluff to hand up; which that done, the same bein' agreeable he at once makes good.

"'If I was dead certain,' says Tutt, surveyin' of the Signal party a heap doubtful, 'if I was shore how this gent wouldn't leave the reservation none, I'd go his bond myse'f. But I'm in no sech fix financial as makes it right for me to get put in the hole for $50,000 by no stranger, however intimate we has been. But yere's what I'm willing to see go. If this Signal sharp wears hobbles (chain with cannon balls attached) so he can't up an' canter off none, rather than see a young gent's neck made a foot longer, why, I goes this bail myse'f.'

"The Signal party is eager for hobbles, an' he gives Tutt his word to sign up the documents, an' he won't run away a little bit.

"'Which the game bein' now settled all congenial an' legal,' says Enright, when Tutt signs up, 'Moore'll he'p the gent on with his hobbles, an' the court will stand adjourned till further orders.'

"After he's all hobbled an' safe, Tutt an' the Signal party starts over for the post-office, both progressin' some slow an' reluctant, because of the Signal party's hobbles holdin' him down to a shuffle. As they toils along, Tutt says:

"'An' now that this affair ends so successful I'd shore admire to know what you and that cutthroat Thompson takes to chewin' of each other's manes for anyway. Why did you refuse to bow?'

"'Which I never refooses once,' says the Signal party. 'I saloots the gent with pleasure, if that's what he needs.'

"'In that case,' says Tutt, 'you make yourself comfortable leanin' agin this buildin', an' I'll project over to Thompson an' see if this imbroglio can't be reconciled a lot. Mutual 'pologies an' whisky looks like it ought to repair these dissensions easy.'

"So the Signal party leans up agin' the front of the post-office and surveys his hobbles some melancholy, while Tutt goes surgin' over to the 'Red Light,' to look up Texas Thompson. It ain't no time when he's headed back with Thompson an' the balance of the band.

"'Give us your hand, pard,' says Texas Thompson, as he comes up to the Signal party. 'I learns from our common friend, Dave Tutt, that this yere's a mistake, an' I tharfore forgives you freely all the trouble you causes. It's over now, an' plumb forgot. You're a dead game sport, an' I shakes your hand with pride.'

"However, we rips off his hobbles, an' then the outfit steers over to the 'Red Light,' to be refreshened an' regaled after all the hard work."

JUMBLE STORY COMPETITION.

No. 2.

Below will be found particulars of a new form of Competition which will take the place of the Picture Puzzle.

Four Prizes, one of £2 and three of £1 each, are offered to the competitors who most nearly put together the lines of the story appearing on the opposite page, in their original order. Each line is complete in itself, and the first line is in its correct position, but the title and signature are jumbled up.

Cut out the lines separately, and paste them up in what you consider to be their correct, readable order on one side of the paper, and send the story in an envelope marked "Jumbled Story."

All competitions to be in by Monday, July 13th.

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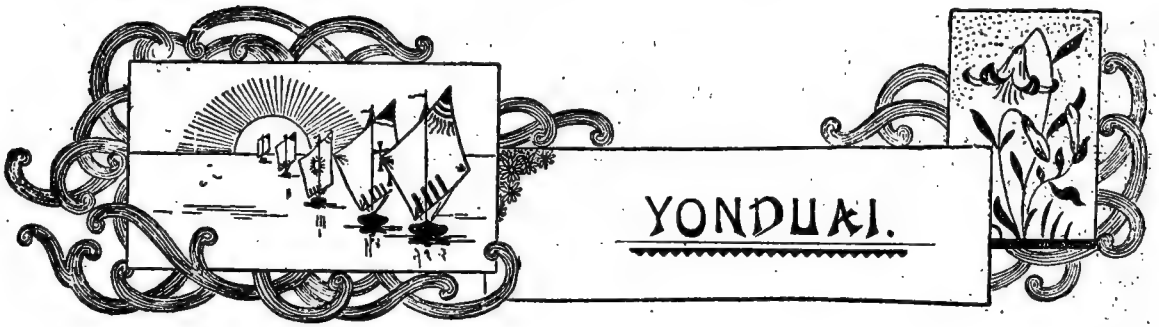

YONDUAI.

A MAN and a woman. A pathway white with the red as those roses sleeping within reach of her fingers, the shadows hid her white gowned figure, and she was bereaved.

The man gazed rapturously on the beauty of her face.

But the fire of love burnt still in his soul, and at last speak, but his voice was choked by emotion. This was the woman's husband.

Lovers. Oh, yes—or why was her cheek stained yellow in her hands. She was beautiful in death as in crumpling her lover's letter with suppressed passion.

"I shall remember," she whispered, "always! You have been all the world to each other—you and I.'

"I have gone where no one will discover me. Justice and I have been more than all the world to each other, more.

The woman untangled her fingers, and passed them to Er gland, to lose my soul in yours. I return to-morrow, a shudder.

Yet, good or evil, he loved her; and the fragrance milky pallor of the moon. Shadows lurking on every falsehood and treachery. Let them love there, if they embrace.

"If you love me, why in the name of——"

The woman raised her eyes, her lips, and the anguish over her brow.

She had found what she sought, rest and repentance! which were locked in the man's palm? He tried to addressed to his dead wife in her maiden name. He had side, emblematical of their two lives.

Between his trembling fingers he held a letter, of parting was forgotten in the ecstasy of a long life.

The grass was wet with dew, and there were drops of the crime, written by the slayer's hand, telling them How pure it looked in the pale light! What a mask has been done, that is enough——"

"You have come for my wife," he said slowly, "she it is inevitable. I have two things to seek, Heaven only gave and denied. Remember your own words: 'We knows if I shall find them."

One word broke hoarsely from her lips: "*No!*"

These three words were repeated in lingering accents, lost in mystery.

"And age spells death," murmured the woman with agony upon her forehead.

"What?" he questioned.

But she clasped her hands, intreating silence.

"Why must you go?" he asked fiercely, "you have beauty horrible in his eyes. Vengeance was turning his feet."

"Ask for no explanations. Would I had never come to the earth.

The lover staggered back, and fell heavily with a groan and one hand stretched across his face hiding the wife."

As she spoke she broke away, rushed wildly on, till he wrote to the woman who had said, "No."

"Stay," he answered passionately, "life is only an address in New York City.

"I must follow you" (he penned the lines feverishly) where to find the murdered man.

* * * * *

Two men stood face to face. A lover and a husband.

A woman was lying dead, with roses white and what a mockery!

Beside her still image sat her husband, his head bent, that faltered and ended in a sigh.

That morning's mail made the cold form of marble shrivel up, and we shall be old."

Only a cloud of smoke rose between his body and you and I!"

The following day she sailed, and the man saw her no sinewy hand seemed bursting through the flesh, while the seas will bring me, I will come to kneel at your good-bye.

"He shall follow her to her home," he muttered, his parted lips were dry and bloodless.

He only treasured a few parched rose leaves, and her soul to gall, mingled with the awful jealousy of the can."

"Rest and repentance!"

* * * * *

No horror crept through the murderer's veins.

Two days later the police received a detailed account of his wrongs.

"They are together now," he said, "in the land of woman's home before she marries? Stay, and be my awful expression thereon. But the veins on that hour; take all that it can give while love is in your soul. Cable me the single syllable, 'Come,' and as fast as To-morrow the summer may be over, the flowers will only just opened it.

One with hope in his heart, the other maddened by no tie in New York! Your home? Bah! What is a the woman had deceived were buried in oblivion.

"You need not seek for me," he wrote in conclusion. of the summer night was creeping into his very being; everything spoke of hitherto undreamed is not here, but you shall go to her."

Here the writing ceased abruptly, and the two men "to your home, dearest, and plead again for the love you possibilities.

Then he wrote the cable: "*Come!*"

FRED GAIRHAMWIN.

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In - Beauty's - Guise.

For a moment he stared in dazed wonder at a pair of fat cherubs pictured on the canopy stretched between the four tall posts of the old-fashioned bedstead on which he lay. The room was in semi-gloom, but the cherubs stood out in bold relief from their white background. Then he looked about him and endeavoured to collect his thoughts.

Eagerly he groped back after straws that would direct his puzzled memory, and presently, his eyes becoming more and more used to this dim half-light, he caught sight of a red coat, torn and muddy, lying across the back of a great armchair near the door. With this there suddenly came to him a vivid recollection of a scene; far off, it seemed in the years long gone, but sharp, clear, and well-defined.

A rough stubble-field, over which a score of horses, each mounted by an enthusiastic huntsman, are madly flying at the top of their speed. Himself in the front, he hears the others following him closely, while just ahead there is the chorus of the hounds in full cry, and the fox itself may be seen darting across the open, not fifty yards in advance of the foremost of its pursuers.

One hedge more to take and the hunt will be over. The brush will be his. It is but an instant, and he feels the horse beneath him leave the ground.

Up, up, he is going as though he never meant to stop, and then—a sudden breath-taking plunge forward. Even as he braces himself for the shock, in less than a heart-beat, he knows that the animal has stumbled; that the horse and he are falling together, and he instinctively struggles to free himself from the stirrups.

Then darkness, black as Egypt, and after that—the fat cherubs on the canopy of his bedstead.

The torn, mud-spattered red coat on yonder chair told him that he had been brought to this room directly from the field, and with this link forged he began to run along the chain and to try to read the story of others.

He wondered as to the time that had elapsed since the accident; whether his injuries were serious; to whose house he had been carried; under whose care he had been placed. He made an effort to raise his head to look about him, but as he did so, a sharp pain, excruciating and cruel, shot through every nerve of his being, and he cried out in the fierce agony of the moment.

Then he became conscious that a woman had risen from a place close by his bedside, and was standing, looking down at him, with great, dark lustrous eyes, in the depths of which he descried an unspoken passion. Tall, slender, and with a dignity that was regal, she seemed to him the quintessence of feminine grace and queenly beauty.

Her face was pale as marble and stern as Fate; but in her wondrous eyes was a longing that wooed him; that brought his breath in quick, convulsive gasps; that made his heart beat faster, and that spread over the pallor of his cheeks a flush that burnt like fever. He stretched forth his hand and clasped her long, taper fingers and held them, cool as stone, in his feverish grasp.

When, some time after, the doctor came in to rearrange the bandages on his injured head, and found him with his eyes open, gazing, a pleased smile on his lips, and his fingers nervously reaching out for the hand which had suddenly eluded him, the professional man looked grave, and a tear trembled for a moment on his lashes.

"Doctor," the patient pleaded, in a voice so weak as to be scarcely heard even in the stillness of this darkened room, "tell me her name. She is my nurse, is she not? She will not leave me. Not for a moment, doctor. Don't let her go from me."

The doctor, in kindly tone, humoured him as best he could.

"She will be with you always," he said, and then his face grew still more grave, and other tears followed the first, rolling down his furrowed cheeks, and dropping on the counterpane.

When at last the doctor withdrew into the curtained embrasure of one of the windows to await the end, which now appeared to him inevitable, she returned and knelt by the sufferer's bedside, listening eagerly to the murmured love passages which he addressed to her, to snatches of amorous verse and quotations from the prose and sentimentalists of all times and all climes.

"Tell me your name," he urged, as he pressed his lips to her chilled hand and stroked her long, shining black tresses; "tell me that I may rhyme it with tender words of true love and deepest devotion."

She smiled as she denied him.

"No, no," she said, "do not ask me. It is because you do not know me that you care for me."

But her refusal made him all the more eager. His voice had become still weaker, but in disjointed sentences he continued his pleading. His hands were reaching now nervously towards her face, which he longed to caress.

"Come closer," he whispered, "closer—and tell me—your name—and that you love me."

She moved nearer to him, the passion in her eyes blazing, her thin cold lips parted. About his racked and bruised body she stretched her long white arms, enfolding him in her strong embrace. Her mouth was close to his.

"I love you," she said, and the words sounded to him like sweetest music.

"I love you," she repeated, and her lips were on his.

His frame quivered under the fury of her caress. His breast expanded with a long, deep-drawn breath; in his eyes was the staring frenzy of mad desire.

"And my name," she went on, as she clasped him still more closely in her long, ravenous arms, "and my name is——"

The doctor finished the sentence. The deep-drawn breath had reached his listening ears. He had risen from his place in the curtained embrasure and had approached the bed.

"Death!" he said.

Edith Summers.

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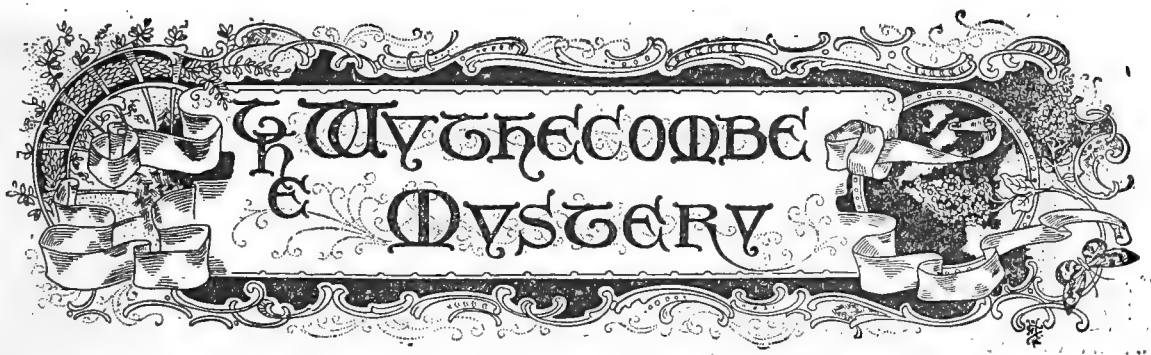

By John K. Leys, *author of "The Tenth of June," etc., etc.*

CHAPTER XXI.

Concerning Mr. Beaumont.

"I have found out something this time!" cried Harold, as Mr. Daunt rose to greet him.

The lawyer looked grave when he heard what the young man had to tell. "I can't say I think your news is favourable," he observed. "Don't you see that Miss Unwin and your friend are now brought together again, just when it seemed as if we had succeeded in separating them? It seems as if your friend left the girl temporarily, intending to rejoin her when he and Beaumont had said all they wanted to say to each other."

Harold's face fell, and for a minute or two he was silent.

"I can't understand Vere's getting tipsy," he said at length. "A more temperate man, as a rule, never lived."

"The knowledge of what he was about to do—break his sweetheart's heart and disgrace himself beyond redemption—was enough to make him drink," observed the lawyer.

"Or he may have been drugged," suggested Harold.

"Possibly. But dinner is waiting. I, too, have learned something. But it will keep. Dinner won't keep. Therefore let us have dinner."

Kenyon would infinitely have preferred to reverse this order of things; but he curbed his impatience, made an excellent meal, and afterwards lit a first-rate cigar with which his host provided him.

"Pull in your chair," said Mr. Daunt, drawing his own chair up to the fire, "and I'll tell you what I've heard about this young man Beaumont. To put it shortly, I've heard no good of him. He was articled, rather late in life, to a Mr. Rogerson, of Rogerson and Payne, Old Bailey—not a first-rate firm, by the way. The young man was a good deal addicted to cards and such like follies; but just before the end of his articles he did something, or was mixed up in some disreputable transaction, which made old Rogerson refuse to sign the young fellow's papers. It must have been something pretty bad, I can tell you, to have such an effect on Johnnie Rogerson, whom I have known aforetime. But eventually the old gentleman consented to sign, rather than have certain other matters brought out; and the scandal was hushed up.

"I tried hard to penetrate a little deeper into the matter, but I could only learn this:

"Among Rogerson's clients was a wealthy old man, who lived in a large house near Richmond, a man named Pascoe——"

"Pascoe!" interrupted Kenyon; "where have I heard that name? Heard it lately, too. I have it, sir! That was the name of Mrs. Unwin's employer—Jane Unwin's mother's master! It was at Mr. Pascoe's house that Jane and my poor friend Vere met each other. Isn't that rather singular?"

Kenyon had sprung to his feet in his excitement.

"Just sit down again, and let us look into the thing quietly and soberly," said Mr. Daunt. "We don't know that the girl Unwin and this man Beaumont were even so much as acquainted. Mrs. Unwin will be able to tell you that. But I did find out that this Mr. Pascoe had a nephew called Abbot, a young man who was supposed to be his heir."

"Mrs. Unwin mentioned him, I think," said Harold; "and I'm sure Vere has spoken of him in his letters to me—but I beg your pardon, sir."

"Well, this Abbot was a scamp; and by and bye the old gentleman found this out, and cut him off—not exactly with a shilling, but with a comparatively small sum of money. And then began the devilment. It was said that Beaumont had allowed Abbot to make use of him to play some trick about the new will which Mr. Pascoe intended making. What the trick was I could not learn; and I don't think it matters. Whatever it was, it was something very rascally, for the old man turned his nephew out of doors; and Beaumont was for a time under a particularly black cloud, as I told you. Pascoe finally made a new will, leaving his property to those who should prove to be his next of kin, excepting Joseph Abbot."

"And to whom did the money go?"

"Some cousin's children are claiming it, and I suppose they will get it."

"I don't quite see how this bears on Vere," said Harold, after a pause.

"Not directly," answered the lawyer; "but at least we know this—that Beaumont and Jane Unwin may have been, probably were, acquainted with each other, and that Beaumont was a man who was willing to join in a nefarious project."

"I hardly see how this girl could have bribed him to help her."

"I don't suppose she bribed him with money. But he may have had some interest that coincided or harmonised with hers. It may have suited them both that Vere should have disappeared for a time."

"Vere couldn't have been a relation of Mr. Pascoe, do you think?"

"I should say not; but on that point also Mrs. Unwin will be able to give you information. I don't quite see how it matters, for whoever might get the old man's money, Joseph Abbot could not possibly touch it."

"It was a hard fate," said Harold. He was thinking of Abbot.

"I fancy it was richly deserved," said Mr. Daunt. "But what is your next step to be?"

"I shall go to Mrs. Unwin," said Kenyon promptly, "and try to find out whether there was any love making, or even ordinary acquaintance, between her daughter and Beaumont. Perhaps, also, she may be able to tell me whether my friend and her late master were related to each other. It is just possible, too, that she may be able to tell me where

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Beaumont's friends live, or put me in the way of tracing him."

"You are very sanguine to expect so much as that," said the lawyer, smiling. "Still, she may be able to give you some information worth having; so I advise you to see her as soon as you can."

"You may depend on it, sir, that I will," answered Harold, as he thanked his host warmly, and bade him good-night.

CHAPTER XXII.

What Mrs. Unwin had to Tell.

There was no difficulty in finding Mrs. Unwin. She had said at the inquest that she was now employed as housekeeper by a gentleman who lived in the neighbourhood of Hampstead; and the tragic occurrence had made some stir in the district, so that she was rather a notable person.

The widow received Kenyon in a small, cheerless room, which looked into a courtyard. It was plain that she was a woman of strong passions. Her large dark eyes looked boldly into those of her visitor, as if challenging him to say one disrespectful word of her daughter.

Nothing, of course, was farther from Harold's mind. But he found it difficult to begin the conversation. How was he to ask the mother of the murdered girl to aid him in establishing the innocence of the man who was believed to have murdered her?

"I suppose you don't remember me," he began; "I gave evidence at 'The Spaniards.' It was I who was so unlucky as to find the revolver case."

A dry suppressed chuckle escaped from the housekeeper. She put her right hand on her knee, palm downwards, and placed her left hand over it.

"As to the revolver," she said, smiling grimly, "I might have given them a hint about that, if they had asked me."

"I'm afraid I hardly understand," said Harold.

"Well, a young gentleman may have two revolvers, or half-a-dozen, for anything I know; but I remember Mr. Vere leaving one behind him at Mr. Pascoe's."

"But the one found on the Heath may have been that very one!" cried Harold.

"I should say it was very possible."

"And why did you not tell this to the coroner? Why allow an innocent man to be charged with murder?"

Harold had risen to his feet. Mrs. Unwin followed his example.

"Innocent!" she cried, her dark eyes flashing, and her voice ringing with scornful indignation. "First he ruins my poor child, then he murders her. And you call him innocent!"

At that moment a new idea occurred to Harold; an idea which might prove important. But it was not yet time to bring it forward. He must first try to calm the mother's angry feelings. He sat down again, and spoke looking up at the indignant woman.

"It seems to me," he said, "that you are unjust to your daughter, as well as to my friend. How do you know that the relations between them were not innocent enough?"

"Because he killed her to get rid of her."

"But how do you know it was he that killed her? The Coroner's jury relied on the evidence of the revolver. But you have just told me that he left a revolver at Richmond He was not likely to have a second one. So you see, it is not proved, or anything like proved, that my friend is responsible for your daughter's death."

Mrs. Unwin had never heard of reasoning in a circle; but she was clever enough to see that the case against Vere was not so strong as she had supposed it to be. Yet she was not convinced. She felt puzzled and uncertain.

"If he did not do it, who did? There was no one else to do it. Don't tell me," she burst out suddenly, "that Jane took her own life! I won't have it! I won't believe it!"

"You remember the doctor said that if she herself had fired the pistol, her dress would have been scorched," said Harold calmly.

"So he did—so he did. And there was no one but your friend to harm her."

"Are you sure of that? Do you know a gentleman named Beaumont?"

"Mr. Beaumont? Yes. What of him? Is he mixed up with it?"

"I am certain that he is. And what I want to know is—were he and your daughter acquainted with each other?"

"There was a Mr. Beaumont came down sometimes to the house at Richmond," said Mrs. Unwin after a pause. "He was a friend of Mr. Pascoe's nephew. I won't say he and my daughter never met. It may be they knew each other by sight. But I'm certain they never were intimate."

"They may have become intimate after your daughter left you."

Mrs. Unwin shook her head.

"When Jane left Richmond, she went straight to Devonshire," she said.

Harold had been building many hopes on the supposition that Beaumont, not Vere, had been Jane's lover. But it did not seem as if the idea was borne out by the facts. There remained, however, a second alternative, one that had occurred to him within the last few minutes.

"I don't see," he said slowly, "why we need suppose that your daughter and Mr. Vere were living together during the time that elapsed after she left Wythecombe."

Mrs. Unwin looked hard at her visitor, and her face worked strangely.

"If you could prove to me, sir," said she, "that my daughter died an honest woman, even though she fell under the power of a villain who took her life, you would do me the greatest kindness a——" She stopped, steadied her voice, and went on—"the greatest kindness a heartbroken woman like me could receive."

"Well, let us begin by thinking that your daughter was pure and good. There is really no reason, no sufficient reason, for thinking anything else. Suppose she simply wanted to live very quietly for some time, to what friend do you think she would betake herself? Whose house would she go to?"

Mrs. Unwin pondered a moment, and then shook her head.

"She would go and live in lodgings," she replied, "the first that might turn up. She was always very reserved, was Jane. She had no young lady friends. She might have gone—no. Surely she never would go *there*."

The last words Mrs. Unwin uttered in a whisper, as if speaking to herself. All the more, therefore, they attracted Harold's attention.

"Had your daughter no cousins?" he asked. "No uncles or aunts?"

"No, none."

"What, then, did you mean when you said she would never go *there*?"

For the first time during this interview Mrs. Unwin hung her head.

There was some discreditable relation in question, Kenyon felt sure. Suddenly he had an idea.

"I remember your saying you were not really a widow, Mrs. Unwin. Do you mean that your daughter might have been staying with her *father*?"

"I didn't mean that she *might* have been there. I said it was impossible. She wouldn't demean herself so far."

"Demean herself!" Harold could not comprehend the woman. "If you want to see your daughter's name cleared of the stain that rests on it," he cried, "you will tell me your husband's address."

Mrs. Unwin gave a convulsive start, but said nothing.

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"I will simply inquire whether Jane, your daughter, had been living under his roof, or under his protection, for the few days that preceded her death. There can't possibly be any harm in that."

"Promise me," she said, "that you will not betray me to my husband, that you will not let him know where I live."

"Certainly I will not."

"Then you can go to the 'Black Swan' at Deptford and ask—ask for Robert Teagle."

"Isn't his name Unwin?"

"That was the name I was married in; and I believe it is my husband's true name. But he's generally known as Teagle. If he's not at home, ask for Ralph Masters, his nephew. Now, I've put my reputation, it may be my life, in your hands."

"I will be careful of the trust," said Harold gravely, "and if I find that your daughter has had less than justice done to her, you may be sure I will do my utmost to restore her good name."

In less than half-an-hour, Kenyon was on his way to Deptford.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AT THE "BLACK SWAN" INN.

IT was without any clearly defined plan of campaign that Kenyon went to Deptford. It seemed natural to make inquiries at the house of Jane Unwin's father. It was possible enough, he thought, that these inquiries might end in clearing away the cloud which had rested on Jane Unwin's good name ever since her disappearance. And in that case Vere's character would be cleared also, to a certain extent. But he had little hope of finding any evidence that would tend to clear his friend of the more serious charge of murder.

Arrived at Deptford, Harold proceeded at once to the "Black Swan."

He found it a large rambling house, which had evidently been in its best days a hostelry of some importance. Long since, however, it had fallen into decay. Two rows of blank, curtainless windows faced the street; the whole place had an unmistakable air of disrepute and neglect; the ground floor seemed to be neither more nor less than a common pot-house.

Altogether the "Black Swan" looked so very black, that Kenyon thought a few preliminary inquiries could do no harm.

He went, therefore, to the best hotel which the place afforded, and ordered luncheon. Having satisfied his appetite, Harold told the waiter that he wanted to ask a few questions about the old inhabitants of the town, and said he would be glad to hear of anyone that could answer them. The waiter advised that recourse should be had to Long Joe, the ostler, a man of wide and varied information.

It was not long before Long Joe was found; and a little hospitality expressed in terms of current coin made it easy for him to speak. The substance of what he said was this:

The landlord of the "Black Swan" was a very doubtful person—more than doubtful, indeed, seeing that he had been "away" for some years—in other words, had been in penal servitude. Before that happened he had married, and had had a child; but his wife and he had not agreed—some folks said he ill-used her badly—and the end of it was she left him, taking the child with her; and no one knew what had become of them. That was before he was sent away; but no doubt his wife knew he was a thief soon after she married him.

When he returned from penal servitude Unwin changed his name; and, managing to conceal his past history, obtained the post of manager of the "Black Swan." He had lived there many years. His wife's name never passed his lips, but he had been heard to speak of his daughter. He had a nephew named Masters, who acted as barman at the "Black Swan."

For some months, however, Teagle, or Unwin, had been showing signs that his days, whether for good or evil, were numbered. He had not been able to do more than potter about the place, and prevent his nephew from transferring the contents of the till to his own pocket.

Such was the account Harold received of the "Black Swan" and its occupants; and he saw pretty clearly that it was Masters, rather than old Unwin, to whom he must address himself.

Entering the tavern, Harold called for a pint of bitter ale. It was handed to him by a stout young woman, and Harold immediately asked for Masters. The girl replied by ushering him into a kind of parlour boxed in between the outer bar and the real parlour of the establishment. Here a loutish young fellow was sitting, poring over a greasy account-book.

"Are you Mr. Masters?" asked Harold.

The young man eyed the stranger as boys at a fourth-rate school eye a new boy of doubtful aspect.

"Yes," said he. "What do you want with me?"

"Is this where Miss Unwin stayed, about a week ago?"

The man's jaw dropped, and he stared at the stranger as if he had seen a ghost.

"I see this is the house," said Harold quietly. "Can you tell me when she left?"

"No! I know nothin' about it. Never heard such a name i' my life."

"That is not true. Your uncle's name is Unwin, and Jane, his daughter, is dead. Did you not know that?"

"No; and I don't believe it. I never knew he had a daughter. Come, get out o' this, or I'll chuck y' out. Wot ye comin' here questionin' an' spyin' on honest folks for? Get out."

"Will you tell me when Jane Unwin came here, whether she came alone, and when she left?"

"No!" roared the human animal at the table, and starting up he sprang on his questioner like a wild beast.

Harold was ready to knock the fellow down; but recognising that a row in a low tavern could do no possible good, and could only bring disgrace upon him, he hastily opened the door and stepped back. It was the wrong door, as it happened; but at the end of the passage into which it opened there appeared the light of day. It mattered nothing to Harold which door he left the tavern by, so he went straight on, meaning to return later in the evening and question the old man or the barmaid.

He had barely reached the outer air, when he heard a shout behind him.

"Come back, you——!" yelled Masters.

Kenyon paid no attention to him. He had crossed the threshold and found himself in a small disused court, used to give light to the bedrooms in the rear of the building.

He was looking about to find a means of exit from the court, when he happened to throw his eyes upwards.

Next instant a cry, half shriek, half roar, echoed through the empty court; and Kenyon had turned, dashed into the passage, floored the barman with one blow of his fist, found the main staircase, and had mounted to the second floor before Masters had risen from the ground. For there, in one of the upper windows, Kenyon had seen the pale, spectre-like face of Launcelot Vere!

"Vere! Vere! Where are you?" cried Harold, pounding at one locked door after another. At last a weak voice answered him. Harold rushed to the door and tried to open it. It was locked. Kenyon threw himself on it, once—twice, and the lock gave way.

"Vere, my poor fellow, what madness has caused you to hide yourself away like this? Why, how ill you look! You are worn to a skeleton, and you are trembling from head to foot!"

Vere was indeed a pitiable object, his clothes dirty and disordered, his face unwashed, thin, and hollow-eyed.

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"Get your things at once, and come with me," said Kenyon.

"I—I don't think I can quite go with you to-day, Harold. But to-morrow, perhaps, or next week, when Jane comes back——"

Kenyon started.

"Could the poor fellow be mad? Could the cruel imprisonment have affected his brain?"

He looked at the colourless face more closely, and as he did so he became conscious of a peculiar odour in the room.

"Launcelot," he said gravely, "you never told me you were fond of opium. You have been smoking opium ever since—never mind. You can explain later. Come with me now."

"You leave that gen'l'man alone. He's soft in his head and we take care of him," said a hoarse voice at the door. It was Masters.

"Indeed? Then you have laid yourself open to another charge, and a very serious one, I can tell you. Let me pass, fellow! Can't you see that the game is up?"

With a hearty curse Masters saw them depart.

In less than twenty minutes he was an inmate of a cell at the police-station; and detectives were searching the "Black Swan" from top to bottom.

* * * * *

Kenyon's first care was to place Vere under proper medical supervision. It was some days, however, before he was able to give a full and satisfactory account of what had befallen him. What he then told Harold was a strange, yet evidently a true story.

"About three years ago," he said, "I was much troubled with neuralgia, and took a great deal of opium. I was ashamed of the weakness, and hid it even from you. Beaumont knew of it, however, for he had surprised me in the act of smoking the stuff. He encouraged me to try and do without it; and in the long run I did break it off. In fact, I was cured—never touched it for two years and a half.

"I must also tell you that about two years ago, I had a—well, a flirtation that threatened to become serious, with the daughter of my patron's housekeeper. She sat to me as my model. You know the sort of thing. I behaved badly, no doubt. At the same time Jane Unwin—that was her name—was quite old enough to take care of herself; and if I did wrong I have been well punished for it. You have seen Miss Denvers. You know what I have lost.

"Two days before the day fixed for my marriage I got a bogus telegram, asking me to meet Winnie at Paddington. Of course I went. Instead of Winnie there appeared Jane Unwin, who said a great deal I need not repeat. She threatened to kill herself at the church door as my bride and I passed out of the church; and I was horribly afraid she would do it. I walked about with her for a time trying to calm her. At last I saw Beaumont, with whom I had an engagement for that evening, so I made an excuse to Jane, who went off more readily than I expected, and I joined Beaumont.

"We dined together somewhere, and then we went to his rooms. He gave me a cigar and a cup of coffee. One or both of them must have been drugged; for I don't even remember falling asleep. I was conscious of being taken a long drive in some vehicle, with Jane Unwin at my side, as I thought.

"When I came to myself I was in a large, bare, badly furnished room—the place you found me in, and I have been kept a prisoner ever since. Jane was constantly at my bedside. She was very tender and loving to me—said she would help me to escape, and we would go to Italy and get married, and all that—but she was constantly dosing me with opium while she pretended to nurse me. The fact is, I often hardly knew what I was saying or doing. I believe on my honour her idea was to weaken my will till I should consent to do what she wanted, apparently of my own accord. She was always taunting me with the fact that Miss Denvers would have nothing more to do with me; and——"

"Don't be too sure of that, Lancelot," interrupted Harold.

"Do you mean that there may be a chance for me yet?" cried Vere, springing to his feet.

"I do. Only prove that you have quite shaken yourself free of that detestable drug, and so far as Miss Denvers is concerned, I should say there is good hope for you."

"She is an angel! You may imagine how I got to *hate* Jane Unwin. At last I think she came to get tired of her task, for she left me."

"Why did you not try to get free?" burst in Harold. "Why not shout, struggle?"

"I did so, my dear fellow, when I was not under the power of morphia. But no one ever heard me. I would have burst open the door, but it opened inwards, and was very strong itself. And I was sadly weakened by the opium. Sometimes, I confess, I smoked it, oftener they gave it me in my food. I got quite afraid of my gaolers; and I fear my will to escape had been worn out for some time. I could not make an effort for my release. That cub and I have a fine account to settle when I get back my strength. As for Jane Unwin, if ever I see her again, which is not very likely——"

"Vere! Don't you know? The poor creature is dead."

"Dead!"

"She was found on Hampstead Heath with a revolver bullet in her heart."

"My God!"

Vere shuddered and covered his face with his hands.

"And you, Vere, stand charged with murdering her!"

(To be concluded.)

In an early number of Short Stories will appear the opening chapters of a new serial story by Mr. George Manville Fenn. No comment is needed on the personality of the author. As regards the story, we only advise you to read the first instalment, and use your own judgment as to its merits.

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SUMMER HEAT AND OBESITY.

"Summer heat, with the out-door enjoyments which come in its train, is a source of unmixed delight to all whose physical condition is sound. The full feast of pleasure to which hospitable Nature at this season invites mankind is not, however, for those whose infirmities forbid them to undergo, without serious discomfort, a considerable amount of bodily fatigue. To those in particular who are the victims of excessive corpulence, the arrival of the genial summer warmth serves chiefly as a painful reminder that, for them, the delights of long woodland rambles, the climbing of mountain tops, and all the adventurous ways of flood and field are prohibited joys. The palpitating heart, the reeling brain, and the possible deadly sunstroke, which are the concomitants of obesity, banish all the pleasant anticipations which once came with the advent of the glad summer tide How much of this deprivation of enjoyment and positive misery is absolutely and easily avoidable may be learned by consulting Mr. F. Cecil Russell's 'Corpulency, and the Cure' (256 pages), a little work whose popularity is proved by the fact that its eighteenth edition has just been issued. This fact, too, indicates, in some degree, the wide area now covered by Mr. Russell's wonderful success as an expert in the reduction of excessive fat. His process, which is absolutely safe and pleasant, is so rapid in its operation, that any over-corpulent lady or gentlemen can easily get rid of all unnecessary weight in a very few weeks, so as to be able, before the autumn is with us, to enjoy the delightful feeling (and the appearance too) of renewed youth and energy. Mr. Russell makes no mystery of the nature of his curative preparation—apparently miraculous as are its effects in simultaneously reducing weight and increasing appetite—the consequently larger amount of food being consumed with impunity. He prints, therefore, his recipe in his singularly suggestive book, which may be obtained post free, by sending two penny stamps to his offices, Woburn House, 27, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C."—*Gloucester Standard.*

CURIOUS EFFECTS IN THE TREATMENT OF CORPULENCY.

"The old-fashioned methods of curing obesity were based upon the adoption of a sort of starvation dietary. Would any reader now believe that by the new orthodox treatment a stout person can take almost double his usual quantity of food, and yet decrease one or two pounds of fat daily for a time? This is very singular, and directly hostile to previous opinions held by medical authorities, yet it is a fact. The author of the comparatively new system in question explains that the person under treatment is restored to a healthier state in the small space of twenty-four hours, having lost probably 2lb. of superfluous deposit, the organs display great activity, and more food is required. By standing on a weighing machine the proof of reduction is incontrovertibly shown daily. In serious cases a pound to ten pounds weekly loss is registered until the person approaches his or her normal weight, then the diminution becomes less pronounced, the muscles firmer, the brain more active, less sleep is desired, and finally a cure effected. Compiled reprints of medical and other journals, and interesting particulars, including the book entitled 'Corpulency, and the Cure' (256 pages), containing the 'recipe,' which is quite harmless, can be obtained post free from Mr. Russell, of Woburn House, 27, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., by enclosing two penny stamps."—*Dublin Weekly Freeman.*

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